Al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an,

The Prolegomena to the Qur’an

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Translator's Introduction

Al-Khu'i's Early Life and Education

Ayatollah al-Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i (b. November 1899), the author of this work, The Prolegomena to the Qur'an, was the highest religious authority for the second largest community of Muslims, the Twelver Shi'ites. Twelver Shi'ites follow the line of twelve Imams after the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632). The last of these Imams disappeared in the tenth century C.E., only to return at some future date as the Mahdi, the messianic deliverer. To his Shi'ite followers, al-Khu'i, like other learned, pious scholars of the Shi'a, was a general deputy of the last hidden Imam, invested with the juridical-religious authority to guide the community, pending his return as the messianic leader. As such, he was one of the most widely acknowledged Shi'ite scholars in this century.

Following his early education in his birthplace, Khu'i, in Azerbaijan, Iran, in 1911 he joined his father, al-Sayyid 'Ali Akbar al-Musawi, who had migrated to Najaf the previous year, after the violent conflict over the goals of the 1906 Constitutional Revolution in Iran.[1] Here, at the age of thirteen, he started his formal religious education in Arabic studies (grammar, syntax, and rhetoric), logic, theology (kalam), Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir), traditions (hadith), legal theory (usul), and applied law (fiqh). In the traditional centers of Shi'ite learning, both in Iraq and Iran, the curriculum for attaining the status of mujtahid (jurist consult) comprised three levels: 'the preliminaries'(muqaddamat), 'the technicalities' (Sutuh),[2] and 'the advanced studies' (bahth al-kharij). Depending on the student's talents and intellectual preparation, the final stage-namely, bahth al-kharij (comparable to advanced graduate studies) - can be reached within a span of nine to ten years.

Al-Khu'i followed the academic course of highly talented Shi'ite youths and achieved advanced standing within a short time. By 1918 he was engaged in gradu- ate studies to enable him to teach Islamic sciences in the colleges of the city of Najaf. Najaf, the site of the mausoleum of the Shi'ite Imam 'AII b. AbI Talib (d. 660) in southern Iraq, has been the center of traditional Shi'ite scholarship in theology, phi- losophy, and jurisprudence for over a thousand years. Moreover, it is famous for its libraries, bookstores, and collections of rare manuscripts on Shi'ite law and theology. Before the political turmoil in Iraq and the troubled relationship between Iran and Iraq in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, Najaf's religious colleges had some 10,000 students[3] from all over the world, who were engaged in receiving the best instruction in highly developed juridical and related Islamic subjects under some of the most prominent Shi'ite savants.

In his emigration to Najaf, al-Khu'i was following a long-standing tradition among the Shi'ite scholars of Iran of acquiring advanced learning in Islamic jurisprudence in order to research, teach, and protect the religious law through their exegetical power.[4] After a number of years of apprenticeship under his father, he completed the first two levels of his juridical studies. From 1918 on, he attended advanced lectures in methodology by the leading mujtahids, the famous ayatollahs Shaykh al-

Shari'a, Mahdi al- Mazandarani, Muhammad Husyan al-Gharawi, Qiya' al-Din al-'lraqi, and Muhammad Husayn al-Na'ini. In these sessions he also presented technical lectures on deductive jurisprudence in the presence of his teachers, thereby acquiring the prestigious credential of ijtihad that enabled him to formulate independent legal opinions through rational interpretations of the sources of Islamic law in all areas of Islamic legal application.

In the Shi'ite tradition of religious learning, the written authorization (ijaza) that the senior members of the religious establishment granted for teaching and formulating independent opinions as an expert exegete of the juridical corpus brought with it social empowerment.[5] Any high-ranking mujtahid who had attained scholarly prestige, in addition to a standing in personal piety by virtue of sound faith and character, and an acquaintance with the circumstances of the age, was regarded as possessing the required qualifications to guide the community in spiritual and mundane affairs. Moreover, such a mujtahid was entrusted with administering all the religiously imposed taxes used in creating and maintaining piously founded institutions like mosques, seminaries, and hospices. Such religious prestige and financial independence were among the major factors that led the religious institution, under a prominent mujtahid, also known as ayatollah (literally, "miraculous sign of God," because of his learning and piety) in Shi'ism, to assert its autonomy without needing any government to legitimize its supervisory role. An ayatollah could, and does, attract a large number of young mullas to join his "study circle" (Hawza 'ilmiyya). Upon their graduation, they become his representatives to the communities to which they are sent as spiritual guides. His religious- moral-legal rulings are available in book form, in a "Practical Guide," known as tawdiz al-masa'il (Clarification of Rulings) for quick reference. When the Shi'ites acknowledge an ayatollah as their leading scholar, the latter's rulings in any matter become binding on them. Moreover, the wealthy in the community send their religious offerings to him. This social empowerment has made some of the leading members of this class the focal point of popular movements to redress political and economic injustices prevailing in nations with a large Shi'ite population, like Iran, Iraq and Lebanon. [6]

The Shi'ite Leadership under al-Khui

The Sunni Muslims have very little sense of loyalty to their government-appointed religious leaders. By contrast, the distinctive Shi'ite conception of autonomous religious leadership in relation to the state has allowed the lay Shi'ite believers to look upon their politically and financially independent ayatollahs as a focus of emulation in all areas of their religious, social, and political life. The civil structure of the Shi'ite community is, in theory, divided into those who lead, the scholars (mujtahid), and those who are led, the lay believers (muqallid)[7] This process through which the acknowledgment of a Shi'ite scholar as a marja 'al-taqlid ("a supreme legal authority accepted as a living referent for society") takes place is known as taqlid (a declaration of a lay believer to emulate a living jurist's rulings [fatwa] in all fields of applied law). The requirement of taqlid, as formulated by al-Khu'i, meant that all the lay believers who were obviously devoid of

religious-legal knowledge must follow the rulings of a mujtahid, without which the acts performed as part of one's religious observances could be rendered invalid.[8]

This requirement to refer to the marja 'al-taqlid, as al-Khu'i formulated it, had a practical and pragmatic dimension. The Shi'ite religious leadership in view of the last Shi'ite Imam's invisible existence-was conceived in terms of a collective responsibility that could be shared by several well-qualified mujtahids. The leadership was understood as a kind of general deputyship on behalf of the hidden Imam, without any specific designation of a leading "specialist" in matters of religion. This lack of specificity with respect to who leads the community was detrimental to the community's sense of religious autonomy and unity, especially when the Shi'ite dynasties that ruled Iran from the sixteenth century came to power. The Shi'ite rulers manipulated religious leadership through patronization for their political ends. More- over, in a political move, these rulers followed the Sunni state policy of reducing the once independent Shi'ite religious leadership to an officially appointed administrative position. However, not all mujtahid s succumbed to such statecraft. One way to preserve the leadership's independence was to keep the community autonomously loyal to the religious leaders by engaging in a fresh interpretation of the legal doctrines that required the believers to specify their religious leader in order to render their religious acts valid.

In the nineteenth century, reforms were introduced in the procedures for determining and centralizing the scholar most qualified to exercise juridical authority under the most qualified jurist, in the absence of the last Imam. If the religious leadership and the community were to steer clear of the menace of the Shi'ite rulers, some legal mechanism that would require the generality of the Shi'ite to declare their allegiance to the mujtahid was necessary. Hence the requirement to emulate a leading mujtahid, through an explicit declaration of taqlid , was formally made part of the believer's religious obligation. Without such a declaration, as al-Khu'i' s previously cited opinion reveals, their religious acts were invalid. This process of taqlid allowed a specific Shi'ite mujtahid to emerge as the supreme religious leader solely through the acknowledgment of the community, without the Shi'ite rulers' interference.

In modem Shi'ism, such a strict understanding of the necessity of taqlid undoubtedly entails the growing influence of the marja ', who also receives voluntary religious taxes levied on the believers through the contacts maintained between the marja' and his lay followers. The marja ', in large measure, is responsible for providing cohesion in maintaining the spiritual-moral identity and the related social-political identity of the Shi'ite community. He manages the community's religious affairs by providing it with legal-moral guidance in the "Practical Guide" he publishes; and he supervises its financial affairs by appointing his agents (wukala'), mostly recruited from among his disciples in his "study circles," to collect and distribute religious taxes for capital projects in various parts of the Shi'ite world in accord with his explicit instructions. Hence, according to a well-established Shi'ite convention, even before an ayatollah dies, the

community leaders have, more or less, formed a consensus on the next person to occupy that prestigious position so as to provide the necessary continuity in the sensitive and crucial juridical leadership.

In due course, both the supervisory and managerial roles of the mujtahid were legitimized under the juridical doctrine of wilayat al-faqih ("the guardianship of the jurist"), which was strictly limited in scope to the realms of applied Islamic law. This included issuing legal opinions (fatwa) when the mujtahid was consulted; arbitrating personal conflicts among the community members; and managing the affairs of minors and legally incompetent persons. However, this "guardianship" did not include political governance as it came to be interpreted by the Ayatollah Khomeini in response to the quietism of the senior mujtahid in the face of the corrupt governments of Iran in the 1950s.

The highly contested political role under the rubric of "guardianship" of the jurist was a culmination of the reforms that had been introduced earlier in the century to legitimize the political involvement of the marja' in directing the Shi’ite society toward modernization and activist ideas regarding social responsibility in Islam. For the first time in the history of Shi’ite Islam, Khomeini's juridical inference regarding the "governance," and not merely the "guardianship," of the qualified jurist ensured the enforcement of Shi’ite activist ideology in the context of a modern nation-state of Iran under the mujtahid' s social and political leverage.[9]

Although al-Khu’i emerged as an independent, leading authority in Shi’ite jurisprudence quite early in his career, his wide recognition as the marja' al-taqlid did not materialize until 1970, the year in which the renowned Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim died. In the late 1970s, al-Khu’i' s widely acknowledged juridical-spiritual leadership was faced with the revolutionary call to rise against the unjust governments of the region -a message preached by Ayatollahs Khomeini and Mul;ammad Baqir al-Sadr. The latter was among the prominent students of al-Khu’i in jurisprudence. The return of Khomeini to Iran in February of 1979, televised worldwide, provided a first glimpse of the new political position assumed by a Shi’ite mujtahid for the Muslim communities around the globe.

The relevance of the marja' leadership to the existing social and political conditions became a critical question for the followers. They exerted enormous pressure on al-Khu’i not only to respond to issues related to the community's everyday religious life but also to direct them in political matters, thereby asking him to abandon his heretofore politically cautious attitude toward the rulers of Iran and IraQur’an Al-Khu’i had resisted the revolutionary wave of the 1970s. He now had to consider taking a critical stance and confronting the corrupt and oppressive political regimes. It was precisely in the assumption of the activist political role by the marja' al-taqlid that al-Khu’i differed with Ayatollah Khomeini.

In 1979, after the Iranian government had criticized al-Khu’i for his failure to support the validity of "the governance of the jurist," as advocated by Khomeini, I had written a letter to al-Khu'i and had sought a clarification of his position on the right to governance for a marja' al-taqlid. In accordance with his view of the quietist role for the jurist, restricted to

providing religious and moral guidance to the community, he argued that there was no documentary evidence, in the well-attested juridical sources, to support Khomeini's interpretation of a constitutional role for a jurist in a modem nation-state. In fact, he firmly believed that Shi'ite men of religion should keep away from state affairs in which they have to compromise with political powers in matters over which they have little control. Moreover, although fully aware of the success of some prominent members of the religious class in combating Communist influences among educated Shi'ites in Iraq in the 1940s and 1950s, al-Khu'i was also aware of the dangers of political activism under the increasingly authoritarian regime in Baghdad. Many of the militant Communists of the 1950s were sons and relatives of men in the lower ranks of the religious class, who had suffered a decline in prestige and prosperity because of the new and remote economic and political forces that were transforming the shape of Iraqi commerce and industry. [10] The Communist uprisings of the 1950s thus coincided with the declining role of the Shi'ite men of religion, whose appeal to the common people to abide by the commands of religion had no effect on either the Communists or the Nationalists, influenced as they were by modem secular ideologies.[11] In other words, al-Khu'i, in line with long tradition among senior ayatollahs in Najaf, advocated a limited role for the marja' al-taqlid in the area of spiritual-moral guidance, a role resembling that of the politically quietist leadership of the Shi'ite Imams under various de facto Sunni governments in the classical age (ninth-eleventh centuries). Avoiding politics was not just a prudent way of surviving the unpredictable behavior of the political actors in the region; it was a religious and a moral obligation to keep Islam and Muslims safe from the factional entanglement of the turbulent Middle East politics.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Islamic education and the leadership it had nurtured in the past in Iraq became considerably enfeebled. Increasing numbers of young students in the seminaries, dissatisfied with the intellectually impoverished and socially irrelevant traditional curriculum, abandoned Najaf to pursue modem education and to acquaint themselves with modern thinking in the universities. Meanwhile, in spite of the economic prominence of many Shi'ites, the vast majority remained economically underprivileged, even as the influence of religious leaders dwindled. The Shi'ites suffered the hardships attendant on their lot as the "poorest of the poor."[12]

In the early 1970s, a new generation of activist and militant Shi'ite organizations and leaders emerged in response to this situation. Their initial raison d'etre was the development and implementation of programs by which social and economic hardships could be eased.[13] The rise of these groups followed a period in which Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr promulgated his activist interpretation of the Shi'ite ideals of justice and equity among learned scholars, as well as lay believers. In the early 1970s, al-Sadr and his disciples interpreted sacred Shi'ite history in such a way as to mobilize the Shi'ite masses to form and join socially and politically activist Shi'ite organizations such as al-da 'wa al-islamiyya (the Islamic Call) and al-Mujahidin (the Islamic Fighters).[14] Most of the prominent

mujtahids, however, remained bound to the traditional restraints of Shi'ism that required them to maintain their probity by shunning politics.

However, the situation in Iraq, following the success of the Iranian revolution in 1978-79, deteriorated quickly, bringing large numbers of Shi'ites into the streets of the major cities of IraQur'an This was known as the intifada (uprising) of the Shi'ites in Iraq, which no ayatollah, however politically quietist, could afford to ignore. The campaign of repression against the Shi'ites reached its height when, following his house arrest on June 12, 1979, the Ayatollah al-Sadr issued a fatwa declaring that it was obligatory for Muslims to engage in a jihad against the godless Ba'th Party.[15] A number of prominent religious leaders were executed and some were expelled in July 1979. The political turmoil turned into violent demonstrations under the Shi'ite leaders of the Islamic movements who constantly sought al-Sadr's directive in dealing with the regime. The climax was reached when al-Sadr, writing during his house arrest, explicitly required the Shi'ites to take radical steps in order to redress their condition in Iraq:

In the present situation, Islam needs not reform, but revolution. The reformative calls that built religious schools and published books are now peripheral, although they served a good purpose. [16] The main battle that Islam is fighting now is against its (Ba'thist) enemies. . . . The only way to change the propaganda (run by the government-controlled education and media) is to change the rulers. [17]

The political turmoil that followed this call for an all-out jihad against the regime ended in the imprisonment and swift execution of Ayatollah al-Sadr and his sister, Bint al-Huda, on April 8, 1980. There is very little information about al-Khu'i's reaction to these grim developments. However, the Shi'ite activists who were expelled to Iran and Syria in the aftermath of al-Sadr's execution were strongly critical of his quietist stance in the face of Shi'ite repression by Saddam Hussein's forces, which continued into the 1980s. The systematic repression of the mujtahids and other leaders that was carried out by Saddam left little doubt that nothing could prevent him from completely annihilating the Shi'ite establishment by executing its major benefactor, al-Khu'i, especially if al-Khu'i, under immense pressure from the revolutionary leaders in Iraq, issued a similar fatwa to revolt against the unjust government of IraQur'an Circumstantial evidence suggests that Iraqi authorities were just waiting for such an opportunity to get rid of al-Khu'i, as they had done with the other prominent and influential leaders in Najaf and Karbala'.

Following the execution of Ayatollah al-Sadr, al-Khu'i asked for permission to leave IraQur'an But he was denied an exit permit and all the religious donations that were in his care, amounting to some two million dollars, were confiscated by the Iraqi government.[18] His communication with the outside world was severed and his students were arrested, while some others were executed, along with his teaching assistants and administrative staff. This treatment, despite his avoidance of politics and his advanced age, was a great blow to al-Khu'i's leadership, and it diminished

his ability, in his position as the marja' al-taqlid, to act as the patron to and benefactor of seminarians and lay members of the community.

The 1978-79 revolution was followed by the Iranian-Iraqi war which lasted from 1980 to 1988. During this war, the conditions remained most unfavorable for al-Khu'i, with his large following on both sides. He and other politically quietist mujtahids[19] were frequently criticized by Iranian officials for downplaying the political aspect of the leadership of a mujtahid under the doctrine of "the governance of the jurist" that was being consolidated through the constitutional process in Iran.

The end of the Iran-Iraq war (in 1988) afforded some respite from the state-run atrocities against the Shi'ite population. In August 1990, Kuwait was invaded with no apparent justification under any pretext in the Islamic law. There is no concrete information available, for the early part of that crisis, as to how Saddam sought religious justification by pressuring the Shi'ite or Sunni leaders of IraQur'an We certainly know, however, that al-Khu'i declared illegal all transactions involving stolen goods from Kuwait that were being sold in the markets in IraQur'an[20] This was an indirect way of saying that the invasion of Kuwait was an unjust war against fellow Muslims and, accord- ingly, that the spoils of war could not be regarded as lawful for possession or sale.

Saddam Hussein's defeat in the Gulf War in 1991 by the American-led coalition put al-Khu'i under extraordinary pressure to comply with Saddam's orders to put down the Shi'ite insurrection and to legitimize his political ventures, including the invasion of Kuwait. In the aftermath of the war, the policy of the Iraqi government was to control all the Shi'ite activities in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala' in order to subvert the Shi'ite culture's protest against the repressive authority. In early March 1991, Saddam's power was faced with a severe internal revolt orchestrated by Iran, the U.S. government, and some of its Arab allies. Saddam's political survival was indeed in question. Najaf, Karbala', and other Shi'ite towns in the south experienced unrest, and there were clearly signs that people intended to overthrow Saddam. At the peak of the uprising, when Najaf appeared to be consolidating under the Shi'ite leaders, al-Khu'i sanctioned the establishment of a "Supreme Committee" of nine people who would oversee Iraq's security and try to stabilize political and social affairs. The committee's role was limited to governing Shi'ite affairs; in no way did al-Khu'i envision "the governance of the jurists" that was formalized in Iran.[21] On March 21, 1991, Saddam resorted to his repressive tactics. He forced al-Khu'i to appear on national television and asked him to appeal to the Shi'ites to end their insurrection. Such a statement from the marja' al-taqlid was primarily intended to undermine Shi'ite confidence in their already weakened leadership. Additionally, it was supposed to send a signal to the Shi'ite movements who were trying to over- throw Saddam, telling them that they could not count on the backing of the most senior religious leadership to legitimize their insurrection. Undoubtedly, al-Khu'i's appearance with Saddam was a public humiliation of the Shi'ite religious leadership. The insurrection that had been encouraged by the United States was ruthlessly crushed, while the international coalition looked the other

way, allowing Saddam to exact his vengeance on his own civilians.[22] The Iraqi forces loyal to Saddam pounded Najaf and Karbala' with artillery and tank fire, killing hundreds of people, destroying homes, gardens, mosques, and Shi'ite shrines.[23]

The Crisis of Leadership in the Aftermath of al-Khu'i's Death

Al-Khu'i's death on August 8, 1992, marked the end of an era in the history of Najaf and of Shi'ite leadership of the marja' al-taqlid. Indeed, for more than half a century, al-Khu'i's leadership had represented a politically moderate, intellectually productive period of Shi'ism in Najaf. In addition, his policy of pursuing the community's social and educational welfare around the globe, by means of the religious offerings of wealthy Shi'ite donors, earned him enormous respect and popularity as the marja' al-taqlid . Although he had distanced himself from the political activism of Ayatollah al-Sadr, he provided sponsorship and funding for Bint al-Huda's social work and educational projects for women in Najaf. Al-Khu'i recognized the contribution Bint al-Huda was making through her regular journal articles and her lectures among women. It was not customary for anyone in al-Khu'i's position to endorse the activist vision of the Muslim woman, such as that of Bint al-Huda, who represented the legitimate demands of the religiously oriented women in society.[24]

In the 1980s, practical considerations prompted lay and religious leaders among al-Khu'i's Persian and Arab followers in Europe and North America to establish the Al-Khoei Benevolent Foundation in order to supervise the large number of religious endowments and other tangible and intangible assets that were, until that time, managed by al-Khu'i's personal representatives. [25] The trustees of the foundation, who were personally appointed by al-Khu'i, included highly successful businessmen. They expanded the mandate of the foundation, registered as a not-for-profit corporation, by empowering the board to solicit, raise, accept, administer, invest, and reinvest the religious funds, and handle other properties. Hence, the Al-Khoei Benevolent Foundation has expanded its activities in many parts of the world and has successfully established centers and schools in London and New York. It has also engaged in humanitarian activities that include feeding Afghani war victims and digging wells in East Africa, as well as voicing concerns at U.N. sessions in regard to human rights violations against the Shi'ites in IraQur'an

Al-Khu'i's death left the Shi'ite community with an evident vacuum in religious leadership. Until 1979, a set process for acknowledging religious leadership was in operation among the Shr'ites. With the emergence of the Islamic Republic of Iran, following the revolution in that year, the acknowledgment of Shi'ite leadership has become intertwined with the endorsement of the Iranian government.

Since the death of al-Khu'i, the question of the religious leadership under the leading ayatollahs has flared up more than once. The deaths of such senior members of the Shi'ite religious establishment as Ayatollah Gulpaygani (d. 1993) and Ayatollah Araki (d. 1994), following the death of

al-Khu'i in 1992, have left the community with several prominent candidates from among the succeeding generation of scholars-mostly among al-Khu'i's disciples-whose leadership, primarily for political reasons, remains to be accredited by both lay and religious experts who represent various interest groups in the worldwide Shi'ite community. To be sure, the question is critical in the apparent absence of a consensus in regard to which leading authority in the Shi'ite community should adorn "the mantle of the Prophet."

The traditionally recognized criteria for determining the qualifications of a mujtahid who could assume the position of the marja' al-taqlid are dominated by the conservative spirit of the Shi'ite centers of religious learning in Qumm and Najaf. There is an ostensible lack of vision in this spirit for the future of the widely dispersed Shi'ite community. Moreover, the conservative spirit is the main reason that the religious centers have not been able to produce a set of objective criteria and a well-defined mechanism to allow for the smooth transition from one ayatollah to another in today's highly technical world.

A further complication in determining the marja' al-taqlid has arisen since the Iranian government gave a formal enactment to the position of the marja' al-taqlid under "the governance of the jurist" in the Iranian national constitution. Whether the Iranian government admits it or not, the determination of the marja' al-taqlid has become part and parcel of Iranian national politics. There is no doubt that this enactment was prompted by the fact that the Iranian government has a direct stake in the determination of the mujtahid who assumes the supreme religious authority of the Shi'ite faith. In the Iranian context, the institution of the marja' al-taqlid has been responsible for providing the necessary Islamic legitimacy for the Shi'ite nation-state of Iran. In addition, the institution is, in large measure, responsible for providing cohesion in maintaining the related spiritual-moral and social-political identities of the Iranian Shi'ites. It is precisely this nationalistic orientation of the marja' al-taqlid that is at odds with the generally held belief among Shi'ite Muslims that it is a universally acclaimed position in the Islamic law, the Shari'a. The Iranian endeavors to obtain worldwide Shi'ite acknowledgment of its version of "the governance of the jurist" is not supported by other leading mujtahid s and their followers among the Shi'ite community at large.

Consequently, since al-Khu'i's death, the question for the Shi'ite community around the world is not merely whether to determine who is next in line as marja 'al- taqlid. Rather, it is a more practical concern: How should the community avoid becoming entangled in the national politics of Iran, or for that matter Iraq, in deciding the most-qualified source of their spiritual-moral emulation? Historically, the com- munity, with its long experience of living under unfriendly governments and at times as a persecuted minority, has safeguarded its religious autonomy without having to bow to any pressures to get a particular ayatollah acknowledged. Shi'ites, whether in Iran, Iraq, or elsewhere, are fully aware that the selection of the marja' al-taqlid is an individual religious duty imposed on a believer as a matter of conscience, rather than an obligation that can be enjoined by the

collective decision of the government or community leaders. Accordingly, it is a vexing question for a believer to recognize a right marja' al-taqlid.

With the formalization of the supreme religious office of the mujtahid in the national constitution of Iran, as far as the marja' al-taqlid is concerned in matters of Islamic law, both the Iranian government and the Shi’ite community are left with the inadequate and mostly unwritten traditional system of transference of the religious authority to the next mujtahid. Whereas the problem of such inadequacy may not cripple the everyday religious lives of the Shi’ite community at large, for a country like Iran it is an urgent national issue. In the absence of traditionally recognized criteria for assuming the supreme juridical office of the marja ' al-taqlid , Iran has acknowledged, albeit tacitly, the constitutionally promulgated position of the religious ideological "guide" in addition to the traditional and mostly ceremonial position, as far as the government's day-to-day functioning is concerned, occupied by the marja' al-taqlid . The emergence of al-Khu’i's disciple Sayyid 'Ali al-Husayni al-Sistani as the marja' al-taqlid of the majority of the Shi’ites outside, and probably within, Iran, is a source of embarrassment for the government: Al-Sistani, like al-Khu’i, has not conceded the legal validity of the political power vested in a marja' al-taqlid through the concept of the governance of the jurist.

In the popular imagination, the presumption that a qualified mujtahid is a general deputy of the twelfth hidden Imam facilitated the upgrading of the institution of the marja' al-taqlid from a position of a supreme legal authority accepted for emulation to an authority invested with all kinds of constitutional and political powers. Naturally, such an expansion in the marja's authority was less problematic in a community that had come to believe that the hidden Imam is in constant communication with the leading mujtahids, guiding and protecting them from committing errors of judgment. These popular beliefs cannot be underestimated in their overall influence on the formation of the Shi’ite political culture. The sense of loyalty between the religiously acknowledged leader and the community of the believers is indeed a unique feature of Shi'ite culture.

The "nationalization" of the transnational, judicially founded position of the marja' that bound the Shi'ites together regardless of their national or ethnic affiliations, in the modem nation-state of Iran, continues to pose questions of legitimacy. By ordaining a constitutional position for the supreme religious authority, Iran was indirectly engaged in appropriating the loyalty of the entire Shi'ite community for the nation-state of Iran. It overlooked the religious implications of creating the modern territorial state under the inherently transnational and transcultural concept of the governance of the jurist, which admitted that with the obligation of acknowledging the supreme holder of that position came the God-given right of the Shi’ite Muslims to live under his rule. The Shi'ite rights to Iran, then, would be on the same principles that allowed the Jews in the diaspora to claim a divinely ordained right to migrate to Palestine. Such an oversight among the Muslim religious leaders is not surprising. Muslim scholars even now continue to think in terms defined by the Islamic legal tradition, which actually never conceived of the world as a community of nation-states. The

Sharr'a always spoke in terms of the Umma, the religious-political community under God's representative on earth. The presuppositions that govern the establishment of the modem sovereign state, however, treat territorial integrity as the fundamental principle of the claim to independent statehood.

In addition, the promulgation of the position of the marja' al-taqlid in the constitution made a mujtahid a state functionary, thereby requiring the government to fill his position with a qualified candidate. By using the model of leadership provided by Khomeini himself, who was able to fill both the traditional and the constitutional roles of the state marja' al-taqlid, the government of Iran was ironically laying the foundation for the future division of the Shi'ite religious leadership into a governmental and a nongovernmental marja'. As observed by al-Khu'i and other leading ayatollahs at that time, the traditional independence of the marja' from government control was bound to be compromised with the establishment of the state marja', leaving the community at large to continue to choose its own preferred marja'.

To be sure, the regularization of the marja' through the state-created and -filled position was designed to overcome the problem of the plurality of the marja', some of whom had not even endorsed the political role of the jurist. Without first having such an agreement in place, the smooth functioning of the state was impossible. The conventional juridical individualism and resulting independence enjoyed by the mujtahid s in discovering the divine purposes for the Muslim community could, and did, create an explosive situation, with a far-reaching impact on the future of the Islamic republic under an ayatollah.

To minimize the occurrence of such a division in the religious leadership in a nation-state, the concept of the governance of the jurist, as expounded by Khomeini, made it obligatory that if and when a qualified marja' al-taqlid existed, he should assume the function of governance, at which point the entire community was under a religious obligation to obey him in all his directives in the interest of Islam and Muslims. The interest of Islam and Muslims, of course, had to be defined by the holder of that office.

Political and juridical problems aside, the institution of the marja' in the modern history of the worldwide Shi'ite community has been plagued by two fundamental problems: (1) the irrelevance of many of the traditional religious directives that affect interpersonal relations and the ensuing law of transactions in the modern world, and (2) the self-serving attitudes that have characterized the immediate family members and close associates of the leading ayatollahs. The loss of confidence in the institution that has been known for its austere, puritanical lifestyle, in addition to the deaths of several leading members of the religious establishment in the first half of the 1990s, have brought to the fore the age-old question about the reforms necessary to make the marja 'relevant in the most challenging times for the community around the globe.

Al-Khui's death, then, accelerated the decline of Najaf as the major center of religious scholarship and the home of modern Shi'ite leadership, which has clearly shifted to Qum in Iran. Najaf chose to follow Ayatollah

al-Sistani, one of the close disciples and associates of al-Khu'i, whereas Qumm found another prominent disciple of al-Khu'i, Sayyid Muhammad al-Ruhani (d. 1997), to be among a handful of mujtahid s that were qualified to assume the supreme religious authority of the marja' al-taqlid. Besides his constituencies in Iraq, Kuwait, and, to a certain extent, Lebanon, al-Sistani seems to be gaining followers in Iran. In other words, al-Khu'i's political and religious legacy is being continued both at the level of leadership and among the followers.

Al-Khu'i's Legal and Exegetical Thought

Al-Khu'i's rigorous quietism allowed him to pursue his scholarly agenda during the most tumultuous periods in the social and political history of the Shi'ites of IraQur'an His position that the politicization of religion should be avoided at all costs was based on his conviction that religion belonged to the domain of personal conscience, which must be protected from governmental interference. At the same time, he was aware of the challenges faced by Muslims who were living under all kinds of secular ideologies that were inimical to their religious heritage. The attraction to Communism among the downtrodden Shi'ite youths and the exploitation of the revolutionary potential of Shi'ism by the Communist leaders of Iraq in the 1950s were still fresh in the memories of many religious leaders of Najaf. Hence, al-Khu'i's major concern in his scholarly endeavors was to respond to the situational aspects of the daily lives of ordinary believers in modern times. Besides his numerous academic works in the field of Islamic jurisprudence,[26] it was a search for an expansive methodology in the derivation of fresh rulings (furu') in applied law that led him to embark on a creative examination of traditional sources of Islamic law. Without such an extended methodology that would aim at restoring diminished confidence in the substantial role of human reasoning, it was impossible to formulate fresh judicial decisions that were needed to guide the community that was being modernized at an ever-increasing pace. The key to this intellectual search lay in approaching the Islamic revelatory sources, like the Qur'an and the traditions ascribed to the Prophet and the Imams, with a view toward decoding the principles (usul) and the rules (qawa'id) behind the deduced judgments (ahkam) of the paradigm cases in the juridical corpus.

In this connection, al-Khu'i was reflecting the impact of Shaykh Murtada al-Ansari (d. 1864), whose methodology in deducing fresh rulings, as expounded in al-Rasa'il (The Treatises), had revised earlier works and defined practical ways to solve con- temporary problems.[27] The teachers whose graduate lectures (bahth al-kharij) al-Khu'i had attended were also the founders of independent schools in legal theory, already foreshadowed in al-Ansari's al-Rasa'il. The last of these renowned teachers who developed al-Ansari's juristic principles was al-Na'ini (d. 1942) whose lectures, which al-Khu'i edited and published in two volumes, under the title Ajwad al-taqrirat (Out- standing Lectures),[28] became the foundation of his own original research in the field of legal principles. In the years that followed, he published several important volumes critically evaluating the works of his teachers and other scholars in the field and asserting his independent methodology in formulating new judicial decisions. The most problematic

area in the methodology was the verification of transmitted sciences (al-'ulumal-naqliyya) as far as evidential evaluation (hujjiya) was concerned. The reason for this was that the admission of any tradition (hadith) as evidence for a judicial decision depended on its being established as authentic. Accordingly, the method of ascertaining the authenticity of a tradition (hadith), through investigating the "chain of transmission" (isnad) that was appended to each report, and through examining its internal consistency, was an indispensable part of the juristic process. The discipline that prepared a mujtahid to methodically investigate this type of documentary evidence in support of a judicial decision is known as 'ilm al-rijal-that is, "scrutiny of the transmitters" who appear in the chains of transmission that originate from the Prophet and the Imams. Investigation of the biographies of the individual transmitters provided information about their veracity and the authenticity, or lack of it, of what they related in the form of the traditions from the Prophet and the Imams.

Al-Khu'i's monumental, multi volume study known as Mu'jam rijal al-hadith (Biographical Dictionary of the Narrators of the Traditions) is a unique contribution in the field of 'ilm al-rijal.[29] In this work he proposed a new method of ascertaining the reliability of traditions that were questioned, for instance, for lack of corroboration or were vitiated because of a missing link in the chain of transmission. The intellectual process of authentication is admittedly based on a juristic presumption about the transmitter's good intention, as long as the substance of the report does not contradict the ethos of Islamic revelation. Al-Khu'i identifies this method of establishing the admissibility of a tradition as a proof of the derivation of a judicial opinion as less than certain, but probably closer to the truth of the matter under investigation.

To be sure, the Qur'an, as the revelation from God, enjoyed a superior position in the hierarchy of sources given for the derivation of legal rulings. Hence, more so than the traditions, the Qur'an could provide a methodological breakthrough in ascertaining the validity of the juristic deduction that "whatever is affirmed by reasoning is also affirmed by the revelation." This latter rule is known as the "rule of correlation" (qai 'idat al-mulizama), which allowed a jurist to infer a ruling purely on the basis of reason.[30] In other words, there was no reason to deny a substantial role for reasoning in unraveling the effective causes behind divine legislation ('ilal al- sharayi'), in order to guide the future concerns in society.

It is important to bear in mind that the contextual exegesis of the Qur'an, founded on its major ethos as a "living" guide for the believers, was quite often overshadowed by the restrictive traditions ascribed to the Prophet, in which the ability of human reasoning to discover the philosophy of legislation was circumscribed by an insistence on authoritative traditions to reveal divine purposes for humanity. For jurist theologians like al-Khu'i, deeply rooted in the study of legal theory in which reason played a significant cognitive role in distinguishing objective good and evil, it was obvious that contemporary juridical deliberations to illuminate the divine intention in legislation were bound to be deficient without a creative interpretation of the evidential function of the Qur'anic text in its most

immediate sense. Hence, al-Khu'i took it on himself to compose a multivolume exegesis of the Qur'an, on the basis of his awareness of the need for such a treatment from the perspective of a legal theorist. Unlike another major work on the Qur'anic exegesis by his contemporary, 'Allama Mubammad Husayn Tabataba'i, whose interests in his al-Mizan fi tafsir al-qur'an (The Scale of Interpretation in the Exegesis of the Qur'an) were far more comprehensive including theological, philosophical, mystical, and linguistic expositions of the Qur'an-al-Khu'i's interests, as is evident in this book, were informed by his preoccupation with Muslim legal thought. The first step was to establish the uninterrupted transmission of the text to confirm its authenticity, after which it would be possible to argue for a fresh legal-theological exegesis. This is exactly what this book, the original volume and this first published translation of al-Khu'i's work, seeks to accomplish.

The Qur'anic Exegesis

Al-Khu'i's book is entitled al-Bayan fi tafsir al-qur'an (literally, The Elucidation of the Exegesis of the Qur'an, but technically, The Prolegomena to the Exegesis of the Qur'an); it is among the less well known of his publications in the area of legal methodology and application. I was a visiting scholar in the Faculty of Shari'a at the University of Jordan in 1990-91 when I received a personal message from the Ayatollah al-Khu'i from Najaf, Iraq, through his son, Sayyid Muhammad Taqi, requesting me to undertake this translation. My first reaction was that there existed a large body of works, in English, on the history of the Qur'an and on the specific issues related to its interpretation, and, hence, that this book would add very little to modern Qur'anic studies. But as I went through the synopsis provided at the beginning of each chapter, I realized that al-Khu'i had treated many of the critical topics connected with the collection and canonization of the text that had received little attention in the works of contemporary Muslim exegetes.[31]

From his own autobiographical note in Mu'jam rijal al-hadith, it is evident that the reform of the Najaf curriculum in legal studies was among al-Khu'i's tasks of high priority. In this program of reform, besides advocating rigorous methods and criteria in the scrutiny of the reporters of transmitted sciences, along with new methods of teaching and learning at all levels of legal studies, it was the teaching of the mostly neglected sciences related to the Qur'an and its interpretation that was critical for training the new generation of mujtahids. He urged his students to pay close attention to the Qur'an, to its history and contextual aspects. To be sure, his interest in the Qur'an was founded on his search for an expansive methodology in jurisprudence. Additionally, he wanted to provide a definitive introduction to the exegesis of the Qur'an from the Shi'ite point of view, especially since the existing literature on the subject comes mainly from the Sunni point of view.

Of all the subjects that have been commonly treated in the history of the Qur'an perhaps most controversial has been the question of the occurrence of alteration (tahrif) in it. The controversial nature of the subject is indeed evident from the polemical tone of most of the works written by Sunni

scholars of the Qur'an. In the disputations between the different Muslim groups, the extremist Shi’ites alleged that the unjust rulers had omitted or inserted things in the Qur'an with the object of falsifying evidence of the truth about the Shi’ite position in the matter of the successor to the Prophet. The Sunni response made the same charge against the Shi'ites that they had introduced in their reading of the Qur'an: arbitrary alterations of the text by omitting parts of it, interpolations, or a wrong exposition of the true sense. Such charges and countercharges implied that the Prophet had left more than may be found in the Qur'an.[32] These intrafaith disputations led to the inevitable and extremely dangerous conclusion for the future authority of the scripture that there is either material missing from the Qur'an that ought to have been included or material added to it that ought to have been excluded. Obviously, if any Muslim admits alteration in the Qur'an, it vitiates its evidential status for Muslim life. Consequently, the Shi'ites have responded to the Sunni polemics with their own.

Accusations against the Shi’ites remain part of the Sunni-Shi’ite polemics epitomized in modem times by the highly contentious book Al-Shif'a wa al-qur'an (The Shi’a and the Qur'an), which was written by Ihsan Ilahi Zahir and published and circulated by Sunni authorities to discredit Shi’ite membership in the Muslim community.[33] The question of alteration in the history of the collection of the Qur'an has been shelved; because of the canonization of the text under 'Uthman (d. 656), the matter is regarded by the Sunni scholars as closed. For the Shi'ites, who are vigorously defending their membership in the larger Muslim community, the matter of alteration is far from being closed. After all, in such polemical exchanges, the Sunni majority retains the upper hand in instituting systematic discrimination against the Shi'a.

For a scholar like al-Khu’i, then, to take up the discussion about alterations, drawing on evidence from Sunni sources, is not only intended to establish the Shi’ite claim to authenticity of their creedal statement about the Qur'an but also meant to challenge the Sunni claim over the custodianship of the authentic version of the Qur'an.

A related question in this connection is the opinion expressed in some of the Shi’ite traditions regarding the extent of the Qur'an, which implies that "alteration" in the sense of "omission" had indeed taken place under the Sunni authorities. For instance, Shi’ite sources speak about a tradition that goes back to the Imam Muhammad al- Baqir (d. 728), who is reported to have told his followers that anyone who claims that he has collected the complete text of the Qur'an is a liar, since no one other than 'Ali b. Abi Talib or other Shi’ite Imams collected all of it the way it was revealed. The tradition implies that there exists another version of the Qur'an, more complete and accurate than the one that is now in the hands of the people. How does one ex- plain such traditions in the Shi’ite sources without contradicting the generally held creedal statement among Shi’ite theologians that the present Qur'an is complete?

In The Prolegomena, al-Khu’i takes up the subject of the extent of the Qur'an in all of its complex historical development. First he provides a convincing interpretation of the events and factors that led to the ultimate

canonization of the text. Then he discusses the early readers of the Qur'an who were responsible for its transmission. There were, in all, ten well-known readers accepted by the Sunnis as reliable transmitters. With his unusual command over materials in the field of 'ilm al-rijal (scrutiny of the transmitters), al-Khu'i establishes the problem of internal incoherence in their biographies and in their claims about the methods of transmitting the Qur'an. He then takes up the reading of the Qur'an adopted by each one, carefully analyzing the variants linguistically and stylistically, to demonstrate that, contrary to their claim of its uninterrupted transmission (tawatur), the reading was based on a single transmission (ahad) and fraudulent documentation.

The discussion about different readings leads him to assess the validity of a long- standing belief among Sunni historians of the text that the Qur'an was revealed in seven "styles" (ahruf). What was the truth about the so-called seven styles, or "dialects"? Was not the Qur'an transmitted, as the Qur'an asserts, in the "clear Arabic" of the people to whom it was revealed? Al-Khu'i takes up the transmission of the belief about the seven ahruf , examines its documentation and internal congruity, and shows it to be a case of fabrication designed to vindicate the variants in the several readings attributable to their having been relayed through a single transmission by the ten readers. He examines the various senses in which the Muslim tradition uses the term "alteration," providing examples from the history of the compilation of the text in each of its various significations. After a critical investigation of these significations, he comes to the conclusion that the present text of the Qur'an, although possessing variant readings that do no damage to the original message, is the one that was transmitted personally by the Prophet himself. In this way he makes a distinction between the process of transmission that took place under the Prophet's personal guidance and its subsequent codification in seven readings under the early caliphs.

Al-Khu'i's own conviction about the collection and transmission of the Qur'an by the Prophet during the latter's lifetime appears, at several points in the book, as a rebuttal of the traditionally held Sunni account that credits the early caliphs with that meritorious act. In this and other sections of The Prolegomena, al-Khu'i's textual analysis of the classical Muslim sources appears to have been undertaken phenomenologically, with an extreme sensitivity toward the Qur'an as the divinely inspired book, whose history of collection was at times impaired by the ideological considerations of the authors.

The exegesis of the Qur'an is essentially founded on a historical method in which the sources that provide evidential documentation are examined thoroughly to ascertain their reliability. Each piece of evidence is further analyzed for its internal consistency before it is admitted as a valid argument in support of a particular thesis. Undoubtedly, in all this intellectual activity, one cannot fail to observe al-Khu'i's implicit scholarly pre-commitment namely, to reaffirm the intellectual credentials of a Shi'ite mujtahid as an authoritative exegete of the Islamic revelation. In Islamic scholarly circles,

such a reaffirmation requires the author to refute attacks, both internal and external, on the integrity of Islamic revelation.

Internally, al-Khu'i was responding to the Sunni refutation of the Shi'ite position about the belief in the actual extent of the Qur'anic revelation. According to some rare Shi'ite opinions, certain sections of the Qur'an that included praise for 'Ali b. Abi Talib, the Imam of the Shi'a, were intentionally suppressed by Sunni readers.[34] Externally, he was responding to Christian scholarship on Islam-produced in large measure by missionaries- which had challenged the very claim of divine origin of the Islamic revelation and regarded the Qur'an as Muhammad's own creation.

The first three chapters of The Prolegomena, entitled "Miracle of the Qur'an," "Erroneous Impressions concerning the Miracle of the Qur'an," and "Discussion about Other Miracles," are certainly in response to external criticism leveled at the Muslim scripture by non-Muslims; the rest of the book responds to Sunni criticisms against the Shi'ites. In addition, the latter chapters, specifically Chapters 8 on, provide the corrective to Sunni views about the history of the revealed text. Although al-Khu'i's command of Sunni materials that deal with the history of the Qur'an is rigorous and compelling in regard to internal criticism, his polemical treatment of the biblical materials from the Old and the New Testaments in response to external skepticism toward the Qur'an is cursory. There is little, if any, reference to the biblical scholar- ship that regards different books of the Bible as being compiled in different stages of their development before their ultimate canonization.

The polemical dimension of traditional Muslim scholarship can be gauged precisely in its attitude toward other Abrahamic scriptures. The "theological" approach prevalent in all centers of traditional Islamic religious learning finds expression in The Prolegomena in the way comparisons between the Qur'an and other revelations are tackled. Biblical sources are evaluated in terms of their being acclaimed as divinely inspired texts, whereas their present state reveals interpolations that distort their true intent for worldly gains. In the final analysis, such biblical citations are brought into focus to enhance the validity of the belief about the Qur'an being the inimitable miracle of Islam and its founder.

Of all the traditional sources used to interpret the Qur'an, Muslims found that the exegesis based on the traditions (hadith) that recounted the explanations of specific passages of the Qur'an was most acceptable because it seemed to recapture the essential meaning of the text under discussion. However, what was actually taught by the Prophet was not always easy to determine because quite often there existed various contradictory interpretations of the same passage. The traditions represented various political and theological trends in the community. The Sunnis accepted only those reports related on the authority of certain narrators who were regarded by them reliable; by contrast, the Shi'ites admitted only those who represented their own viewpoint. No opinion was accepted as an authoritative documentation for the specific exegetical opinion on the Qur'an if it did not meet the ideological-sectarian criterion. Consequently, in

the history of the Qur'anic exegesis, the interpretation based on the traditions was most prone to factional considerations and prejudices.

Although al-Khu'i uses both Sunni and Shi'ite traditions to prove his points, he mainly relies on the Sunni traditions to highlight the problems that surround their transmission and evidential value. Thus, for instance, in his detailed discussion about the problem of identifying abrogating and abrogated verses of the Qur'an with certainty, he relies heavily on Sunni sources to refute Sunni claims of abrogation of particular verses on the basis of evidence provided by the traditions. The subject of abrogation also provides him with the opportunity to present the Shi'ite views de- rived from the very passages that were regarded by the Sunnis as being abrogated. Hence, al-Khu'i endeavors to prove that Sunni judicial decisions on critical issues in inter human relationships that had to do with capital punishment, offensive warfare, the validity of a divorce based on a triple-repudiation, and the invalidity of temporary marriage were derived from traditions that claim abrogation of the Qur'anic passages that deal with these matters. There is a fundamental methodological concern in al-Khu'i's criticism in this connection namely, Can the tradition become the source of Qur'anic abrogation? The question has been debated among Muslim jurists because of its implication for the position of the Qur'an when compared with the traditions. Nevertheless, al-Khu'i's purpose in raising this theoretical question is, understandably, to demonstrate the validity of some rulings-for instance, on temporary marriage-derived from the so-called abrogated verses, after making a rigorous scholarly appraisal of the sources used as contrary evidence by the Sunni authors.

Juridical Significance of the Exegesis

Al-Khu'i was essentially a jurisprudent. His interest in the Qur'an was in discovering, through the historical knowledge of the language of the Qur'an and those who spoke it, the relationship of the divine message to social exigencies and other human conditions. Although it is in large measure a work of history, there is an implicit admission in The Prolegomena that understanding the variations and disagreements among Muslim exegetes requires an understanding of the political and social forces that influenced their interpretations of the "occasions of revelation" (asbab al-nuzul). These interpretations, in tum, were motivated by the distinct positions on the creed that were held by the individual commentators engaged in reading specific creedal and juridical inquiries into the meaning of the Qur'an.

The best example is provided by al-Khu'i's treatment of the abrogation (naskh) of the verse which actually instituted temporary marriage (mut'a) in the Qur'an. The inherently subjective nature of any historical enterprise is underscored as a major factor in al-Khu'i's continual interest in unfolding the understandings of earlier commentators of the verses that deal with the disputed institution of temporary marriage in the Muslim community.

Al-Khui'i underscores an important prerequisite in one's approach to the Qur'an as a vital source for moral-spiritual guidance-namely, that there is a constant need to explain the historical setting of the revelation so as to uncover the principles that were applied in the development of Muslim society and its ever-expanding legal and ethical scope. In this intellectual

process of providing exegetic principles for searching for historical precedents and for extracting the doctrinal and juridical principles from precise references in the Qur'an that are relevant to contemporary situations, The Prolegomena stands within a long and creative history in the development of the Qur'anic exegesis in Islam.

The Present Translation

This translation is based on the book's first Arabic edition, which was published in Beirut in 1974 and also contains the exegesis of the first chapter of the Qur'an. I have omitted that in the translation because the book is complete, in its central theme, as The Prolegomena to an Exegesis of the Qur'an, without that section. All the references have been carefully checked and collated for the accuracy of the citations and for completeness of bibliographical information. I have added my elaborations to the translation using square brackets. The citations from the Qur'an and other texts are part of the original text. There are a number of appendices to which the author makes references in the footnotes. However, they are, in most cases, footnotes that provide extensive references to the sources and the variations therein. Accordingly, where appropriate, I have summarized them in the endnotes.

I would like to thank some people who were directly or indirectly connected with this project. At Oxford University Press, Cynthia Read was instrumental in recognizing the scholarly worth of the work and supporting its publication wholeheartedly. Cynthia Garver, with her patience and professional expertise in handling texts with complex substance and format, provided the necessary supervision in preparing the work for publication.

The present translation would have been impossible without the moral encouragement that I received from the Ayatollah al-Khui'i and his son, Sayyid Muhammad Taqi al-Khui'i (d. 1995). Sayyid Majid al-Khui'i, his younger son and the director of the Al- Khoei Benevolent Foundation, provided important documentation for the Ayatollah al-Khui'i' s life and career in Najaf and the missing bibliographical information on some rare sources cited in The Prolegomena. Of course, Sayyid Fadhil al-Milani, my teacher and friend, was always there when I needed him to disentangle some textual problems connected with Ayatollah al-Khui'i's juridical style of writing.

Notes

1. The sketchy biographical information in this book is derived from an autobiographical note on him in his Mu'jam rijal al-hadith (Najaf: Matba'at al-Ji.dab, 1981), vol. 22, pp. 22-26.On the other hand; he provides detailed information about his education, his teachers, and his own teaching in Najaf.

2. Chibli Mallat, The Renewal of Islamic Law: Muhammad Baqer as-Sadr, Najaf and the Shi'i International (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 39-41, calls these levels study cycles and lists all the texts that are studied at each level of the mujtahid' s education. The level of Sutuh (plural of Sath) signifies an "unfolding" of the technical terminology that is applied in the deductive jurisprudence. Hence, I have identified this level with "the technicalities." Yitzhak Nakash, The Shi 'is of Iraq (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 245, also gives the details of the three stages and correctly

identifies the sutuh as involving rational jurisprudence and principles of deductive jurisprudence.

3. The number of students at Najaf in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries fluctuated between eight thousand and twelve thousand, depending on the political conditions in the city. Nakash, The Shi 'is of Iraq, pp. 241-42, discusses these numbers in the con- text of the development of the religious colleges under the leadership of some prominent mujtahid s at the turn of the century. That number dwindled to some eight hundred after the Gulf War. Following the Shi'ite insurrection in 1991, the remaining students disappeared. During my May 1996 visit to the holy cities of Iraq, some local students were gradually beginning to acquire the traditional education privately.

4. Hamid Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969) gives a detailed account of the jurists' regular visits to the holy cities of Iraq for higher learning under the well-known mujtahids.

5. Abdulaziz Sachedina, The Just Ruler in Shi'ite Islam: The Comprehensive Authority of the Jurists in Imamite Jurisprudence (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 61-64; I discussed the ijaza system and its importance in the traditional educational system pursued in the Muslim seminaries.

6. Sachedina, "Activist Shi'ism in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon," in Fundamentalisms Observed, ed. Marty Martin and Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 403-56; also, Yann Richard, Shi'ite Islam (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 77-109 offers useful insights into the development of the activist posture in the context of the Shi'ite tradition of religious professionals.

7. Mallat, The Renewal of Islamic Law, p. 44.

8. Al-Khu'i, al-Masail al-muntakhaba: al- 'ibadat wa al-mu'amalat (Beirut: Dar al-Andali1s, 1971) p. 2.

9. Sachedina, The Just Ruler, pp. 227-29.

10. Hanna Batatu, The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 22-24.

11. Sachedina, "Activist Shi'ism," p. 441.

12. Batatu, Old Social Classes, p. 47.

13. Chibli Mallat, "Iraq," in The Politics of Islamic Revivalism: Diversity and Unity, ed. Shirin T. Hunter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 74.

14. Ibid., pp. 76-77.

15. For a detailed discussion of the revolutionary fervor that existed at this time in the major Shiite centers in Iraq, see Joyce N. Wiley, The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi 'as (Boulder, CO.: Lynne Rienner, 1992), chap. 3.

16. This was an indirect hint in regard to al-Khu'i's quietist reform program in Najaf.

17. Wiley, The Islamic Movement, p. 54.

18. Ibid., p. 57.

19. Ayatollahs Muhammad Rida Gulpayagani (1889-1993), 'Abd Allah Musawi Shirazi (1901-91), and Hasan Tabatabai Qummi (b. 1911) are among the few senior mujtahids who disagreed with the constitutionally formalized "governance of the jurist" in Iran.

20. This fatwa was communicated by Sayyid Majid al-Khui

21. Nakash, The Shi'is of Iraq, pp. 276-77.

22. Ibid., pp. 275-76.

23. Ibid., pp. 278-79.

24. A detailed biography of Bint al-Huda, written by Ja'far Husayn Nizar, is entitled Adhra' al- 'aqida wa al-madhha: al-shahida bint al-huda (Beirut: Mu'assasa Ahl al-Bayt, 1985); it lists her articles in the monthly journal al-Adwa' (published in Najaf), to which she and other supporters of the political ideas of Ayatollah al-Sadr contributed regular articles. She wrote about her vision of an ideal Muslim woman for the present-day Muslim society.

25. Al-Khoei Benevolent Foundation,Al-Khoei Foundation: Concepts and Projects, 1992. (London: Al-Khoei Foundation, 1992).

26. The list of his publications in this area, which include several volumes, is extracted from his lectures by his prominent students and is published under the title of al-taqrirat (Lectures) or al-tanqih (Reexamination of Lectures). Some other works were in the form of

commentaries on the famous works of jurisprudence by the great doctors in the field. For the significance of taqrirat, see note 28.

27. Sachedina, The Just Ruler, pp. 210-215.

28. In the last century, several books have been published under the title of al-taqririit. These books resemble the classical texts that were entitled amili, meaning "dictated, edited" works in the field of traditions (Hadith). The latter works were written, during a meeting of a teacher of traditions and students, by the teacher himself or through his dictation; hence, the listener would disseminate the book in the name of the teacher. On the other hand, taqrirat are the highly academic lectures delivered in the presence of the students, requiring students to memorize them, learn them, and then transcribe them at another meeting. Such works were regarded as the students' compilations. Hence, whereas amall works were credited to the teachers of Hadith, taqrirat works were ascribed to the students of usul. See Agha Buzurg Tihrani, al-Dhari'a ila taanif al-shi'a (Beirut: Dar al-Adwa', 1972), vol. 4, pp. 366-67.

29. The work has been published in 24 volumes (completed in 1969) by Matba 'a al-Adab, in Najaf, and has been reprinted several times.

30. For this and other rationally derived rules, see Hossein Modarressi Tabataba'i, An Introduction to Shi'i Law (London: Ithaca Press, 1984), pp. 3--4.

31. Among the Western scholars on the subject of the collection of the Qur'an, John Burton, The Collection of the Qur'an (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), has done some revisionist scholarship on the history of the Qur'an, which in many ways shares al-Khu'i's main thesis about the Qur'an having received its present form under the Prophet himself.

32. On the subject of the extent of the Qur'an in the context of the history of its collection, and the traditions relating the subject among early Muslims, see: Burton, Collection of the Qur'an, p. 130 and 145. The author cites early sources like al-Bukhari, Ibn Abi Dawud, and Ibn Hajar who report the debates between the followers of the 'Ali and the other companions.

33. Apparently, the author was killed in Lahore, Pakistan, for writing still another polemic that criticized the Shi’ites, which was entitled al-Shi'a wa al-tashayyu ': Firaq wa ta 'rikh (The Shi’a and Shi'ism: Sects and History). This was published several times and distributed to the pilgrims in Mecca.

34. Joseph Eliash, "The Shi’ite Qur'an: A Reconsideration of Goldziher's Interpretation," Arabica , vol. 16 (1969), pp. 15-24, examines the Sunni views about the Shi’ite Qur'an that had an impact on the Western scholarship that took such views at their face value. Eliash brings out the official Shi’ite views about the extent of the Qur'an and offers a corrective to Goldziher's earlier work about two extra chapters in the Rampur, India, and manuscript of the Qur'an.

Introduction

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, this is an explanation for the people, and guidance and exhortation for the God-fearing.

Synopsis: Analytical discussion of Qur'anic sciences and of the importance of the Qur'an; its universal and legal explanations; methods and principles of its exegesis; aspects of its miraculous nature and its distinctiveness; its various readings and its protection from omission and alteration.

Foreword

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Praise be to God, who revealed to His servant [Muhammad (S)] the Book, and has not placed therein any crookedness. [But He has made it] straight to give warning of stem punishment from Him, and to bring to the believers who do good works the news that theirs will be a fair reward.

Wherein they will abide forever [Qur’an18:1-3].

This is a Book the revelations whereof are perfected and then expounded.

[It comes] from One Wise, Informed [Qur’an 11:1].

Falsehood cannot come at it from before it or behind it.

[It is] a revelation from the Wise, the Owner of Praise [Qur’an 41:42].

This is the Book whereof there is no doubt,

guidance to those who ward off evil [Qur’an 2:2].

The Holy Spirit has revealed it from your Lord with truth, that it may confirm [the faith of] those who believe, and as guidance and good tidings for those who have surrendered [to God] [Qur’an 16:102]. It is no invented story but a confirmation of everything, and guidance and a mercy for folk who believe [Qur’an 12:111].

And lo! It is in truth a Reminder for you and for your folk; and you will be questioned [Qur’an 42:44].

God's mercy and His peace be on the Prophet whom,

He sent with the guidance, the religion of truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religions, however much the unbelievers may be averse [Qur’an 9:33].

The unlettered Prophet whom they will find described in the Torah and the Gospel [which are] with them: He will enjoin on them that which is right and forbid them that which is wrong [Qur’an 7:157].

And God's mercy be on his family, the excellent and the selected ones,

Who believe in him [Muhammad (S)] and honor him and help him, and follow the light [the Qur'an] that was revealed with him [Qur’an 7:157].

They are the truthful ones and the witnesses [to the revelation] with their Lord; they have their re- ward and their light [Qur’an 57:19].

God is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Him. They are the Party of God. Lo! is it not the Party of God that is prosperous? [Qur’an 58:22].

And God's eternal curse be upon their enemies,

Who have exchanged guidance for error. Thus, their bargain did not profit them, and neither are they guided [Qur’an 2: 16].

The day when they come forth from their graves in haste, as racing to a goal, with eyes aghast, abasement stupefying them: Such is the Day which they are promised [Qur’an 70:43-44];

the day when their excuse avails not the evildoers, and theirs is the curse, and theirs the ill abode [Qur’an 40:52].

Preface to the First Edition

Why Did I Undertake This Exegesis?

Since boyhood, I have been passionately fond of reciting the Exalted Book of God and exploring its ambiguities and sublime meanings. It behooves a true Muslim- rather, every thinker-to apply himself to understanding the Qur'an, clarifying its mysteries, and acquiring its illuminations; for it is the Book that guarantees the establishment of peace, happiness, and order for human beings, and promotes their prosperity and helps them attain it. The Qur'an is, moreover, a reference book for the lexicographer, a guide for the grammarian, a competent authority for the jurist, a model for the man of letters, a goal of persistent search for the sage, an instructor for the preacher, and aspiration for the moralist. From it are derived the social sciences and public administration; on it are based the religious sciences; from its guidance are discovered the secrets of the universe and the laws of nature. The Qur'an is the eternal miracle of the everlasting religion. It is the exalted and lofty order for the equally exalted and lofty Shari'a (sacred law).

From my boyhood, I was very devoted to the Qur'an's recitation, seeking to understand its meaning clearly and to disclose its purpose. This passion became stronger whenever I was able to understand an aspect of its manifold meanings and to fathom one of its numerous mysteries. This passionate love became so compelling that it drove me to read the books of exegesis and explore their depth. It was here that I found what baffled and confused me.

I discovered the insignificance of human reasoning and thinking in comparison with the greatness of God in His Qur'an. I realized the deficiency of the creature in his finitude and subservience before the perfection of the Creator in His absolute beingness and majesty. I saw the Qur'an proudly soaring and those other books ignominiously diminishing. I also found that a human being strains to understand the Qur'an and uncovers one or two aspects; then he records these in a book which he calls an exegesis, implying that it clarifies the ambiguities of the Qur'an and unveils its mysteries. How can anyone believe that the imperfect can encompass the perfect? Nevertheless, these scholars deserve praise and recognition for their endeavors.

Undoubtedly, the Book of God has cast on their minds a ray of its light and clarity from its guidance. Indeed, it is unfair to expect anyone, however knowledgeable and thorough, to have an all-encompassing knowledge of the meanings of the exalted Book of God. Yet these exegetes may still be criticized for limiting themselves to the aspects of the Qur'an that are easily understandable and leaving aside its more exalted aspects. Hence, some of them explain the literary and grammatical aspects of the Qur'an; others discuss it from the philosophical point of view; still others analyze it on the basis of modern sciences-and so on; as if the Qur'an were revealed only to be understood from the perspective of a given exegete.

Some of the exegetes have written commentaries that contain very little exegesis. Others analyze the Qur'an either from their own point of view or

according to the views of others whom God did not appoint as His proof among His creatures.

It is necessary for the exegete to proceed where the verse of the Qur'an leads him, and to bring to light its meaning wherever it points. He should be a philosopher when a passage contains philosophy, an ethicist when a passage deals with morality, a jurist when a passage deals with jurisprudence, a sociologist when a passage discusses society-and so on. Furthermore, the exegete should be able to expound on the literary technique of the verse and on the style of its vocabulary and phrasing. Indeed, to be an exegete, one should write a comprehensive work on Qur'anic sciences. The fact is that I have not found a single exegete who has succeeded in doing that.

In view of this, I decided to write this work of exegesis, in the hope that God will help me in what I intend and will forgive me where I fail. Consequently, I have taken it upon myself to gather in this book what I can of the Qur'anic sciences that pertain to the meaning of the text. As for the sciences of Qur'anic style, I shall in most cases avoid them, for they have been extensively treated by a great number of exegetes, such as al-Shaykh al-Tusi in his al-Tibyan, al-Tabarsi in his Majma' al-Bayan, and al-Zamakhshari in his al-Kashshif. However, I shall deal with these stylistic aspects when the discussion requires it or when I find that an important aspect was neglected by other exegetes. Occasionally, I shall turn my attention to some important aspect even when other scholars have not neglected it.

The reader will find that my exegesis shall not deviate from the literary meaning of the Qur'an and its precise verses, nor shall it depart from the uninterrupted and universally accepted traditions (tawatur),[1] which have been related through reliable chains of transmission from the inerrant Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (the progeny of the Prophet) (peace be upon him and his progeny). In addition, I shall abide by what would be independently accepted by innate reason, which God has made an internal proof, just as He has made [the teachings of] His Prophet and of those of his family who are divinely protected from error [the Imams] (peace be upon all of them) an external proof.[2] The reader will also find that I frequently explain one verse with the help of another and that I seek guidance from the Qur'an itself to understand its meanings; and, subsequently, I employ the related traditions to support this comprehension.

What follows are a number of topics closely related to the purpose of this work, which shed some light on several of its aspects. I start with these because they will serve as an introduction to the exegesis of the Qur'an. They include academic topics related to the greatness and miraculous nature of the Qur'an; its immunity from alterations and freedom from contradictions; the principle of abrogation in its laws; and other such academic questions that need to be clarified as an introduction to understanding the Qur'an and exegeting it on a sound intellectual basis.

To God I turn humbly in supplication that He may grant me success and look upon my work with approval. Indeed, He is Praiseworthy, Glorious.

The Excellence of the Qur'an

SYNOPSIS The inability of human beings to describe the Qur'an; those among human kind who are the persons best informed about its status; the Prophet's discourse on the excellence of the Qur'an; the Qur'an is divinely protected from alteration; it guards the community against dispute; it is eternal and comprehensive; merits of reciting the Qur'an; topical traditions regarding its recitation; reflections on the meanings of the Qur'an; knowledge of its exegesis; encouragement, from the Qur'an, the prophetic tradition (sunna), and the mind to reflect [on the meaning of] the Qur'an.

It is better for a human being to refrain from delving into this topic and to humble himself in front of the Qur'an' s greatness. Indeed, an admission of inadequacy is better than proceeding with this discussion. What can a person say in describing the eminence of the Qur'an and its glory? What can he say to explain its excellence and sublimity? How can a contingent being perceive the greatness of the speech of the Absolute Being? What can an author write about this subject and what can a speaker say? Can a limited being describe anything that is unlimited?

It is sufficient greatness for the Qur'an, and sufficient eminence and glory, that it is the speech of the Almighty God, and the miracle of His noble Prophet, and that its verses are the guarantee for the guidance of human beings in all their concerns and circumstances and at all times. This is their guarantee to reach the final goal and the great happiness now and later on:

Lo! this Qur'an guides to that which is most upright (Qur’an 17:9). This is the Book which We have revealed to you [O Muhammad], that thereby you may bring forth human- kind from darkness into light, by the permission of their Lord, to the path of the Mighty and Owner of Praise (Qur’an 14:1). This is a declaration for humankind, a guidance and an admonition to those who ward off [evil] (Qur’an 3: 138).

It is related in a tradition that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said: "The superiority of the Speech of God over other speeches is like the superiority of God over His creatures.[3]

Indeed, it is better for a human being to stop short at this topic and hand over the elucidation of the excellence of the Qur'an to those comparable to the Qur'an. They are the persons most knowledgeable about its status, and the best able to point out its lofty prestige, and they are its peers in excellence and its associates in guidance. As for their honorable grandfather, he is the one who proclaimed the Qur'an and guided [them] to its principles and propagated its teachings. Regarding this, he said: "I leave among you two things of high estimation: the Book of God and my descendants, my Ahl al-Bayt. These two will never separate until they return to me by the Pond [of Kawthar]."4

The "descendants" in the tradition are the guide to the Qur'an, being knowledge- able about its excellence. Accordingly, it is necessary that we should restrict ourselves to their sayings, and receive enlightenment from their instructions. Indeed, they have been compiled by 'Allama Majlisi in volume 19 of his multivolume work Bihar al-Anwar. Here, we shall limit ourselves to a few of these traditions.

Al-Harith al-Hamadani relates the following:[5]

I entered the mosque and some persons were in deep controversy about some Hadith traditions. I went to 'Ali [b. Abi Talib (A.S)] and said: "Are you aware that people at the mosque are in dispute over the Hadith?" He said: "So they have done it!" I said: "Yes." He said: "I have indeed heard the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) saying, 'There shall be sedition (fitan) after me.'" I asked: "How do we avoid that?" He [the Prophet] said: "The Book of God, the Book of God. In it is the information about those who were before you and what will come after you, and it will be the judge among you. It is the final decision and not a jest [cf. Qur'an 86:13-14]. It is that which not even the mighty could forsake without being shattered by God. Whoever seeks guidance in anything other than it, God will lead him astray. It is the firm rope of God; it is the wise remembrance [Qur'an 3:58]; it is the straight path. With it, hearts will never deviate, nor will the tongues utter confusion. Scholars will never have their full of it; it will not wear out from constant use, nor will its wonders be exhausted. It is that which when the jinns heard it, they could not help saying: 'We heard a marvelous qur'an [recitation] [Qur'an 72:1].' Whoever utters it speaks the truth; whoever rules by it is just; whoever abides by it will receive his just reward; and whoever calls for it shall be guided to the straight path. Follow it, O A'war."[6]

There are several significant points in this tradition, the most important of which we would do well to explain. The Prophet's saying, "In it is the information about those who were before you and what will come after you" bears several meanings. First, it may be a reference to the second creation- the world of the Barzakh and the final reckoning and requital of one's actions. This is probably the most likely explanation, for it is corroborated by a passage in one of the Imam 'All's orations: "In it [the Book of God] is the information about those who were before you, the criterion of judgment among you, and the information about your final return for the day of reckoning (ma 'ad)."[7]

The second possibility is that it refers to the events of the unknown future that are mentioned in the Qur'an.

The third possibility is that it is an intimation that what happened to bygone nations will also happen exactly the same way to this nation [of Islam]. In other words, it would have the same meaning as God's saying, "That you shall journey on from plane to plane" (Qur'an 84:19), and as the prophetic tradition "You shall follow the practices (sunah) of those who came before you."[8]

As for the Prophet's saying, "It is that which not even the mighty could forsake without being shattered by God," it seems to contain a promise that the Qur'an is protected against tampering by tyrants. Since the Qur'an is divinely protected, the tyrants will stop reading it and acting on its injunctions, and they will seize it from the people, as happened in the case of the other heavenly books.[9] The phrase, accordingly, refers to the immunity of the Qur'an against alteration. This we shall discuss at greater length later. The same meaning is implied by the Prophet's saying, further on, "With it, hearts will never deviate" that is to say, that personal desires cannot change it, in the sense that to deviate from the meaning of the Qur'an

would be to change it. This, again, will be discussed at length when we present an exegesis of the relevant verses.

The tradition also alludes to the fact that if the Muslim community turns to the Qur'an to resolve its disputes and all the things that are incomprehensible to it in regard to its beliefs and actions, the Qur'an will surely point the way for it. The people will find that it is a fair judgment among them and the criterion by which truth is distinguished from falsehood.

Indeed, if the Muslim community were to implement the limits of the Qur'an and to follow its suggestions and exhortations, it would certainly know the truth and its people, and would acknowledge the rights of the Prophet's descendants, whom the Prophet declared the peers of the Book. They are, indeed, the second vicegerent of the community after the Prophet.[10] If the community is to seek enlightenment from the Qur'anic sciences, it would certainly escape the painful doom and would not succumb to blindness, nor would it be overwhelmed by the darkness of ignorance. Not a single person would then deviate from the obligations ordained by God or slip off the straight path. But Muslims have stubbornly turned away from the Qur'an and followed their desires. They have rallied under the banner of falsehood, and matters have reached the point where Muslims accuse each other of disbelief and curry favor with God by killing other Muslims, violating the sanctity of their homes, and plundering their possessions. What greater proof could there be of the community's neglect of the Qur'an than this deep disunity?

The Commander of the Faithful ['Ali b. Abi Talib (peace upon him and his progeny)] describes the Qur'an as follows:

Then God revealed to him [the Prophet] the Book. It is a light whose radiance shall not be extinguished; a lamp whose flame shall not die; an ocean whose depth shall not be fathomed; a path which shall not lead astray; a blaze whose brilliance shall not be darkened; a criterion whose evidence shall not be suppressed; an elucidation whose cornerstones shall not be demolished; a cure with which there is no fear of ailments; a power whose supporters cannot be defeated; a truth whose helpers will not be forsaken. Thus, it is the source of faith and its prosperity; it is the fountainhead of knowledge and its vastness; the meadow of justice and its flowing streams; the support of Islam and its foundation; the valleys of the truth and its fields; an ocean that shall not be drained by those who draw upon it; a spring that shall not be exhausted by those who draw from it; a watering place that shall not be depleted by those who come to it; a station whose road the travelers do not miss; a signpost which the wayfarers will always see; the hilltops that cannot be bypassed by those who seek them. God has made it the quencher of the thirst of scholars, a vernal season for the hearts of the jurists, a destination for the path of the righteous, a cure after which there is no malady, a light which does not alternate with darkness, a rope whose knots are firm, a stronghold whose peak is impregnable. It is [a source of] power for whoever cultivates it, peace for whoever dwells on it, a guidance for whoever follows it, a laudable act for whoever embraces it, an argument for whoever speaks for it, a witness for whoever fights for it, a sharp instrument

for whoever bases his arguments on it, a support for whoever sup- ports it, a means of deliverance for whoever employs it, a sign for the discriminating, a shelter for whoever seeks healing, a source of knowledge for whoever has sense, and the best narrative for its transmitters, and a means for the one who sits in judgment.[11]

This brilliant oration reviews many important points which call for careful reflection. For instance, by saying that the Qur'an is "a lamp whose flame shall not die," the Imam 'Ali means, as he does in many other statements in this oration, that the Qur'an is a book whose significations shall not be exhausted. It will remain fresh and new until the Day of Resurrection. A verse may have come down regarding a specific occasion or person or community, yet its relevance is not limited to that occasion, person, or community; rather, its signification and applicability are general.

Regarding the verse "For every people there is a guide" (Qur’an 13:7), al-'Ayyashi reports the following discussion with Abu Ja'far [the Imam al-Baqir]:

The Imam said: "'Ali is the guide, and the guide is always one of us." I said: "Then you-for whom may my life be a sacrifice are now the guide." "You are right," said the Imam. "The Qur'an lives and will not die; the verses [of the Qur'an] live and will not die. If a verse were to die with the death of the persons concerning whom it came down, then the Qur'an would have definitely died. Rather, such a verse would continue to apply to those who are alive as it did to those who died."

Another tradition reports that the Imam al-Sadiq said: "Certainly, the Qur'an lives, and has not died; and it is existent just as the day and the night and the sun and the moon are existent. And it will exist for the last among us as it has existed for the first."

[In volume 2 of his] Usul al-Kafi, al-Kulayni notes that the Imam al-Sadiq said, in response to 'Umar b. Yazid, who had asked him about the meaning of verse 13:21, [which reads:] "Such as [the men of understanding (ulu al-albab)] unite that which God has commanded should be joined": [The Imam said:] "This verse came down concerning the descendants of Muhammad-peace be upon him and his progeny. But it could also apply to your kinsmen. Be not one of those who say that the verse is related to only one thing."

The Tafsir al-Furat [as related by the Imam al-Sadiq]: "If a verse were to die with the death of the people concerning whom it came down, undoubtedly nothing would remain of the Qur'an. But the beginning and the end of the Qur'an are in perfect harmony, and will remain thus as long as the heavens and the earth remain. For every people there is a verse which they recite; its good and its evil apply to them."[12]

In addition to this, there are other traditions which also speak about the same subject. [13]

[Returning to the Imam 'Ali's description of the Qur'an]

As for saying, "A path which shall not lead astray," the Imam 'Ali meant that the Qur'an is a road on which a person does not lose his way. This is because God revealed it as guidance for His creatures; therefore, He guards those who follow it from straying.

His saying that the Qur'an is "an elucidation whose cornerstones shall not be demolished" could mean one of two things. One is that the cornerstones of the Qur'an are its gnosis and teachings, and that all the truths that are in it are firm. They will not weaken or collapse. The second, is that no defect shall befall the text of the Qur'an, nor shall any loss. The phrase would accordingly imply that the Qur'an is divinely protected from alteration.

The phrase which says that the Qur'an is "the meadow of justice and its flowing streams" means that justice, in all its aspects of adhering to proper standards of belief, action, and morality, is contained in the Precious Book. It is the compendium of justice and the confluence of its different aspects.

"The support of Islam" means that the integrity of Islam and its firm stance through the Qur'an are like a pot which stands firm because of the props well placed under it. [14]

"The valleys of the truth and its fields" means that the Qur'an is the fountainhead of the truth. This sentence, in short, compares the Qur'an with the extensive earth of good hope and the truth with the vegetation which flourishes in it. In this, there is an indication that anyone who adheres to anything other than the Qur'an shall not attain the truth, for the Qur'an is the source of truth, and there is no truth except in the Qur'an. By "an ocean that shall not be drained by those who draw upon it" and the next few phrases, the Imam 'Ali (peace upon him and his progeny) means to say that those who apply themselves to understanding the message of the Qur'an cannot reach its end because it is endless in significance.

'The hilltops which cannot be bypassed by those who seek them" means that the seekers cannot attain the heights of the Book, and therefore cannot go beyond them. The phrase alludes to the fact that there are hidden meanings in the Qur'an that cannot be understood by those who have intellection. We shall clarify this point in later parts of this work, God willing. On the other hand, the phrase may mean that when a person reaches the peak, he stops there and seeks no more, because he feels that his aim is fully realized at that point.

The Merits of Reciting the Qur'an

The Qur'an is the divine law (al-namus al-ilahi) that assumes toward people the responsibility of reforming religion and worldly life, and guarantees their happiness in this life and the life to come. Each of its verses is an overflowing source of guidance and a mine of teaching and of mercy. Whoever desires eternal bliss and success in the ways of religion and the world should heed the Book of God day and night, and memorize its verses and blend them with his thoughts. Thereby, he would tread in the light of the "wise remembrance" [Qur’an 3:58] toward a success which has no end, and an "imperishable gain" [Qur’an 35:29].

Numerous traditions have been transmitted from the Imams of guidance and from their noble grandfather (peace be upon him and his progeny) on the merits of reciting the Qur'an. Among these are the following:

The Imam al-Baqir (A.S) said:

The Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny) said: "Whoever recites ten verses at night will not be recorded among those who are neglectful. Whoever recites fifty will be recorded among those who are

mindful; whoever recites one hundred verses will be recorded among the obedient; whoever recites two hundred will be recorded among the humble; whoever recites three hundred will be recorded among the triumphant; whoever recites five hundred will be recorded among the diligent; and whoever recites a thousand, for him there will be quantities of gold nuggets." [15]

Another tradition reports that the Imam al-Sadiq (A.S) said:

The Qur'an is the covenant of God for his creation. Thus, it is necessary for every Muslim to look into His covenant and read, every day, fifty of its verses. [16]

The Imam also said:

What prevents a merchant among you who has been busy in the market, that, when he returns to his home, he would not sleep until he has recited a chapter from the Qur'an? For every verse he recites, ten good deeds would be recorded for him and ten bad deeds erased. [17]

He also said:

It is your duty to recite the Qur'an, because the stations of paradise are equal to the number of its verses. On the Day of Resurrection, whoever used to recite the Qur'an would be told, "Recite and ascend"-and for every verse he recites, he shall be raised a station.[18]

The compendiums of Shi'ite scholars contain many traditions similar to those quoted above. Whoever wishes to know about them may look them up in these compilations. Volume [19] of Bihar al-Anwar [by al-Majlisi], in particular, includes many of them.

All these traditions refer to the excellence of reciting from the text of the Qur'an, rather than from memory. Among these traditions is the one reported by lshaq b. 'Ammar from the Imam al-Sadiq (A.S):

[I asked the Imam:] "May my life be a sacrifice for you? I have memorized the Qur'an by heart. Is it more excellent that I recite by heart or should I look at the text (al- muhiaf)?" The Imam told me: "Rather, recite while looking at the text, for it is more excellent. Do you not know that looking at the text of the Qur'an is a form of worship?" [19]

The Imam also said: "Whoever reads the Qur'an from the text would enjoy good eyesight and would lighten the burden of his parents even if they were rejecters of faith."[20]

This urging to recite the Qur'an by sight involves a significant aim worthy of consideration-namely, to prevent the Qur'an from disappearing by ensuring that its copies will multiply. In other words, if recitation from memory had been accepted, there would have been less demand for copies of the written text. Therefore, there would have been few of them around, and eventually they might have disappeared altogether.

But aside from that, the numerous salutary effects of recitation that the traditions mention can result only from reciting by sight. Among these are the Imam's saying [that whoever recited by sight] "would enjoy good eyesight." This is a most comprehensive expression that could mean that reciting from the text protects the eyes from blindness and ophthalmia, or that reciting it makes the reader enjoy the important meanings and subtle points of the Qur'an. This would happen because when people look at an

object which they appreciate, they will find joy in it, and both eyes and comprehension would be invigorated. The same happens to the reader of the Qur'an. When he lets his eyes wander over its words, and sets his mind free to dwell over its meanings and ponder its forms of knowledge and valuable teachings, he will discover the pleasure of understanding them and the joy of yearning for them, and will witness happiness from his spirit and aspiration from his heart.

The noble traditions call our attention to the merits of reciting the Qur'an at home. The underlying reason for this is the propagation of Islam and the spread of the recitation of the Qur'an. If the man of the house were to recite the Qur'an at home, the woman would recite it as well, and so would the child, and the message would thus spread. By contrast, if specific places were designated for the recitation, this opportunity would not be available for everyone, nor at all times. This is one of the most important ways for the propagation of Islam. In addition, it would seem that another essential reason for [the encouragement to recite the Qur'an at home] is to establish the divine sign when the voices rise in the recitation, morning and evening. Islam would thus become exalted in the minds of the listeners for the amazement they would experience when the voices of the reciters rose from every corner of the city.

Of the traditions which speak of the effects of reciting the Qur'an at home, the following may be cited:

Without doubt, a house in which the Qur'an is recited and God the Exalted is remembered, it is a house whose blessings will multiply. The angels will visit it, the devils will abandon it, and it will glow for the dwellers of the heavens as a bright star glows for the people of the earth. As for the house in which the Qur'an is not recited, nor God the Exalted remembered, its blessings will diminish. The angels would desert it and the devils would visit it.[21]

Indeed, what has been related in the traditions about the excellence of the Qur'an and the blessings God reserves for those who recite it is astonishing to the intellect and perplexing to the mind. The Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) has said:

Whoever recites a letter from the Qur'an, a good deed shall be recorded for him, and each of these good deeds will be equal to ten good deeds. I am not saying that alif, lam, mim constitute a letter; rather alif is a letter, lam is a letter, and mim is a letter.[22]

This tradition has also been reported by Sunni traditionists. Al-Qurtubi reported it from al-Tirmidhi, who had reported it from Ibn Mas'ud.[23] Al-Kulayni reported a similar tradition on the authority of the Imam al-Sadiq[24](Peace be upon him and his progeny) Whoever investigates the books and compendiums of hadith literature will find numerous traditions on the merits of the Qur'an and its recitation, and of the special characteristics of each chapter and verse.

However, there is an infamous group of untruthful Hadith narrators who imagined that what was transmitted on these matters was not sufficient; therefore, they invented narratives regarding the merits of the Qur'an and its chapters about which there is neither revelation nor Prophetic tradition.

These narrators included Abi 'Isma Faraj b. Abi Maryam al-Marwazi, Muhammad b. 'Ukasha al-Kirmani, and Ahmad b. 'Abd Allah al-Juwibari. Indeed, Abu 'Isma al-Marwazi confessed to these fabrications. When asked, "Where did you find the traditions reported by 'Ikrima on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, regarding the separate merits of the chapters of the Qur'an, each on its own?" he replied: "I saw that people were turning from the Qur'an to the jurisprudence of Abu Hanifa and the battle narratives of Muhammad b. Ishaq [al- Waqidi]. So I made up this tradition only to please God."[25]

Abu 'Amr 'Uthman b.Salih, commenting about the tradition which was related on the authority of Ubayy b. Ka'b-who had reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) on the merits of the separate chapters of the Qur'an- said: "A scholar searched the source of this tradition until he reached a person who confessed that he and a group of traditionalists had fabricated it. Indeed, al-Waihidi and other exegetes who have included it in their works of exegesis have committed an error."[26]

Look at these presumptuous traditionalists; how they attribute a false tradition to the Messenger of God! And not content with that, they claim that these falsehoods were for the sole reason of pleasing God. "This is what they do, made [to seem] fair to the prodigal" (Qur’an 10:12).

Contemplating the Qur'an and Understanding Its Meanings

The Qur'an and the authentic tradition strongly urge us to reflect on the meanings of the Qur'an and contemplate its purposes and goals. God says in this respect, "Will they not meditate on the Qur'an, or are there locks on their hearts?" (Qur’an 47:24). This verse is a stem rebuke for those who neglect to reflect on the Qur'an. A tradition reported from lbn 'Abbas relates that he heard the Prophet say, "Understand the Qur'an and seek its marvels."

In another tradition, Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami says:

We heard from those of the Prophet's companions, who used to teach us the Qur'an, that they used to receive from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) ten verses [at a time], and did not start on the next ten till they had learned what the previous ten taught and what deeds they required.[27]

In still another tradition, it is related on the authority of 'Uthman [b. 'Affan][28] and lbn Mas'ud that the Prophet used to read for them ten verses, and would not pass on to the next ten until they had learned everything about [the first ten verses]. Thus he taught them the Qur'an and the deeds based on it together.[29]

It is related on the authority of the Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib, that he mentioned Jabir b. 'Abd Allah al-Ansari and described him as knowledgeable. A man told the Imam: "May my life be a sacrifice for you! You have described Jabir as knowledgeable, and you, you are what you are!"The Imam said: "He knew the interpretation of God's revelation, 'Lo, He who has given you the Qur'an for law will surely take you back to a place of homing'" (Qur’an 28:85).

It has been said that 'Ali b. Abi Talib mentioned Jabir b. 'Abd Allah and described him as knowledgeable. One of those present [in the gathering] told him: "May I be your sacrifice! You attribute knowledge to Jabir, and you, you are what you are!"

'Ali replied: "He used to know the meaning of God's saying, 'He who has given you the Qur'an for law will surely take you back to a place of homing"' (Qur'an 28:85).[30]

The traditions regarding the merits of contemplating the Qur'an are numerous. Volume 19 of Majlisi's Bihar al-Anwar includes a large number of these traditions. However, the merit of contemplating the Qur'an does not require research on the traditions. This is because the Qur'an is the Book which God revealed as a law for people to follow in their worldly affairs, and to illuminate, with its beacon, their path to their Hereafter. These results would not be attained without contemplating the Qur'an and pondering its meanings-and this is something which reason determines; and what is contained in the revealed text regarding it only points the way to it.

Kulayni' s al-Kafi reports that al-Zuhri said:

I heard the Imam 'Ali [Zayn al-'Abidin], son of the Imam al-Husayn (peace be upon them both), say: "The verses of the Qur'an are stores of treasure. Thus, whenever you open one of them, it is necessary for you to see what is inside it.[31]

Notes

1. Tawatur (successively, uninterruptedly) is a technical term connected with the transmission of the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition (Hadith). A mutawatir transmission is one that has been communicated by a large number of narrators whose agreement on a falsehood is inconceivable. This condition must be established in the entire chain of transmission (isnad), in every generation. In other words, it should have been reported uninterruptedly and successively. Once this condition is met, the authenticity of the transmission becomes generally acceptable. Hence, some scholars translate tawatur as "universally acceptable."- Trans.

2. Muhammad b. Ya'qub al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi: al-Usul wa al-Rawda, ed. 'Ali Akbar al-Ghaffari, 12 vols. (Tehran: Al-Maktabat al-Islamiyya, 1963-68) vol. I, pp. 102-5.

3. Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, 110 vols. (Tehran: Al-Maktabat al-lslamiyya, 1942-), vol. 92, Kitab al-Qur'an, p. 19; Muhammad b. 'Isa al-Tirmidhl, Al-Jami' al-Sahi, in Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Arabi al-Ahwazi, 'Aridat al-Ahwazi bi-Sharh Sahi al-Tirmidhi, 12 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm Lil-Jami', [1972)), vol. 11, p. 47.

4. Tirmidhi, Sahi, vol. 13, pp. 200-1. The hadith about the "two weighty things" has been related by major Sunni traditionists, including Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Hanbal, Al-Musnad, 20 vols. (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, (1958)) vol. 3, pp. 14, 17, 26, and 59, on the authority of Abu Sa'id al-Khuqari; in vol. 4, pp. 366 and 371, on the authority of Zayd b. Arqam; in vol. 5, pp. 182 and 189, on the authority of Zayd b. Thabit. See also, 'Abd Allah b. 'Abd al- Rahman al-Darimi, Sunan al-Darimi, ed. 'Abd Allah Hashim Yamani, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dar al- Mahasin lil-'Tiba'a, 1966), vol. 2, p. 431, in the section on the merits of the Qur'an. Further, Jalal al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman b. Abl Bakr al-Suyuti, Al-Jami' al-Saghir, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Alamiya, n.d.), relates and authenticates the tradition on the authority of al-'fabranl (going back to Zayd b. Thabit). Al-'Allama al-Manawl, in his commentary on Suyuti's Jami', vol. 3, p. 15, says that, according to Haythami, all the persons mentioned in the chain of transmission of this tradition are reliable. The tradition has also been related by al-Hakim al- Nisaburi, Al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahiayn, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 3,p109, on the authority of Zayd b. Arqam, and has been accredited. Although there are variations in its wording, there is agreement on its meaning among the traditionalists.

5. Harith b. 'Abd Allah al-A'war al-Hamadani is, according to the consensus among the Imamite scholars, one of the most prominent associates of 'Ali b. Abi Talib(peace be upon him and his progeny), known for his piety, moral probity, and service to him. In

biographical dictionaries, he has been regarded as reliable, and several Sunni scholars have mentioned him and praised him. Thus, Ahmad b. 'Ali ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, Tahdib al-tahdhib, 12 vols. (Beirut: Dar Sadir, n.d.), in his note on al-Harith, cites several authorities like al-Duri, 'Uthman al-Darimi, Ash'ab b. Sawar, and Ibn Abi Dawud, who have accredited him and have regarded his transmissions as reliable. Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Qurtubi, Al-Jam'i li-Ahkam al-Qur'an [Tafsir al-Qurtubi] 20 vols., 3d ed. (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1387/1967); in vol. 1, p. 5, he mentions that al-Sha'bi had tarnished the reliability of al-Harith by ascribing a falsehood to him, which was baseless since there was no evidence to support such an accusation. Apparently, al-Qurtubi says, it was his excessive love for 'Ali b. Abi Talib(peace be upon him and his progeny), and his placing him above all other associates of the Prophet, that prompted al-Sha'bi to impute a falsehood to him. Also, Ibn Hajar has vindicated al-Harith's reliability and has regarded al-Sha'bi's charge against him as lacking evidence. There is little doubt that al-Harith was accused of a falsehood simply because of his love for 'Ali b. Abi Talib(peace be upon him and his progeny). In that case, what should one say about those traditions-reported by all Muslim traditionists- in which the Prophet himself is engaged in relating the merits of 'Ali b. Abi Talib (peace be upon him and his progeny)and demonstrating his excellence? On one occasion, when Mu'awiya was reviling 'Ali b. Abi Talib(peace be upon him and his progeny) in the presence of Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas, the latter objected, saying that how could anyone malign a person who shared the character of the Prophet. See: Hakim, Al-Mustadrak , vol. 3, p. 108.

6. Darimi, Sunan, vol. 2, pp. 312-13; cf. variants in Tirmidhi, Sahih, vol. 11, pp. 30-31, and in Majlisi, Bihar, vol. 92, pp. 24-25, citing 'Ayyashi, Tafsir.

7. Majlisi, Bihar, vol. 92, p. 27.

8. Ali b. 'Abd al-Muttaqi, Kanz al- 'Ummalfi Sunan al-Aqwal wa al-Af'al, ed. Hasan Razziq and Safwat al-Saqqa, 16 vols. (Aleppo, Syria: Maktabat al-Turath al-Islami, n.d.). The tradition is mentioned by Sahl b. Sa'd. It is also cited in Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 5, p. 218; Muhammad b. Isma'il al-Bukhari, Al-Jami' al-Sahih, edited, with an English trans., by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, 8 vols. (n.p.: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), vol. 7, p. 151; Muslim Ibn al- Hajjaj, Sahih, vol. 3, p. 74.

9. Muhammad Jawad al-Balaghi, Al-Huda ila Din al-Mustafa, 2 vols. (Saida, Lebanon: n.p., 1911-12), vol. 1, pp. 19-34.

10. See note 38 for a reference to the tradition about the "two weighty things." In some versions of this tradition, it is explicitly mentioned that the vicegerents of the Prophet are the Qur'an and the Prophet's descendants.

11. 'Ali b. Abi Talib (peace upon him and his progeny), Nahj al-Balagha, compiled by al-Sharif al-RadI Muhammad b. al- Husayn, commentary by Muhammad 'Abdul, ed. 'Abd al-'Aziz Sayyid al-Ahl, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dar ul-Andalus lil-Tiba'a wa al-Nashr, 1963) vol. 3; pp. 390-92.

12. Abu al-Qasim al-Furat b. Ibrahim b. al-Furat al-Kufi, Tafsir al-Furat al-Kufi, ed. Muhammad Karim Tihrani (Tehran: Musassasat al-Bab al-Tab'a wa al-Nashr, 1990), p. 11.

13. Abu al-Hasan al-'Amili al-Isfahani, Muqaddimat Tafsir Mirat al-Anwar wa Mishkat al-Asrar fi Tafsir al-Qur an (Tehran: Chapkhanah-i Aftab, 1954).

14. Athafi (singular: uthfiya) are the stones (usually three) which are placed under a pot to steady it.

15. Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 11, pp. 34-35; Muhammad b. Al Hasan al-Hurr al'Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'a ila Tahsil al-Shari'a, ed. Mirza 'Abd al-Rahim al-Rabbani, 9 vols. (Tehran: Al- Maktabat al-Islamiyya, 1956-1969) vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 33-35.

16. Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 11, p. 31; Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 849.

17. Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 11, p. 33; Hurr al'Amili, Wasa 'il, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 851.

18. Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 11, p. 27; Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 840, 842.

19. Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 11, p. 37; Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 854.

20. Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 11, pp. 36-37.

21. Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 11, p. 32.

22. Unconnected letters occur at the beginning of some chapters of the Qur'an, e.g., 2: I and 3: 1.-Trans

23. Qurtubi, Jami', vol. I , p. 7.

24. al-Kafi, vol. 11, p. 34.

25. Qurtubi, Jami', vol. I, p. 78.

26. Qurtubi, Jami', pp. 79.
27. Majlisi, Bihar, vol. 92, p. 106.
28. He was the third caliph among the rashidun, who was murdered in the year 656c.e.-Trans.
29. Qurtubi, Jami', vol. I , p. 39.
30. Ibid., p. 26.
31. Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 11, p. 31.

1. The Inimitability of the Qur'an

Synopsis: The meaning of i'jaz (inimitability); [the fact that] it is incumbent on the prophets to perform miracles; [that] the best miracles are those which best resemble the most advanced arts of the time; the Qur'an as a divine miracle; the Qur'an as an eternal miracle; the Qur'an and the [forms of] knowledge; the Qur'an and the correctness of expression; the systems of regulation and legislation in the Qur'an; the precision of expression in the Qur'an; the disclosure of hidden matters by the Qur'an; the Qur'an and its characteristic underlying meanings.

Language usage provides several meanings for the word i'jaz (inimitability) and its derivatives. These include: to be unable to do a certain thing, to find that someone is unable to do a certain thing, or to cause someone to be unable to do a certain thing. Hence [using various forms of the word i'jaz], we say: "This task a 'jaza so-and-so," meaning that it is beyond that person's ability; and "A'’] Zayd," meaning that I found him incapable of doing something or, alternatively, caused him to be incapable of doing it.

In its conventional application, i'jaz means that a person claiming a divine appointment proves the truthfulness of his claim by doing things that go beyond the laws of nature and that others cannot accomplish.

However, a miracle is evidence of the truthfulness of the claimant only when it is possible for that person to be truthful in that claim. But, if the truthfulness of his claim is refutable, either by the intellect or by a reliable transmission from a prophet or from an Imam whose inerrancy is well attested, such a miracle cannot be evidence of the veracity of the claim, nor can it be called a miracle as defined by common usage, even if other human beings are incapable of emulating it.

An example of the first basis of refutation is when someone claims to be a deity. The truth of such a claim is unacceptable to the mind, for there are sound proofs which establish its impossibility.

An example of the second basis of refutation is when someone claims to be a prophet after the Prophet of Islam. Such a claim is absolutely false on the basis of definitively reliable transmission from the Prophet of Islam and from his inerrant vicegerents, that his prophethood is the seal of prophecy. When the claim is unquestionably false, what is the benefit of the evidence brought forward by the claimant? Moreover, it is not incumbent on God, the Exalted, to expose the falsity of such a claim when reasoning has already decided that it is impossible, or when transmitted evidence has established its falsity.

By contrast, it may happen that a person claims a divine appointment and performs a deed beyond human power, yet that deed serves as evidence of his falsity. This was the case with Musaylima, who is reported to have spat in a dilapidated well to increase its water; instead, the water that was in it dried up. He is also said to have passed his hand over the heads of the children of Banu Hunayfa and rubbed their palate [as the Prophet had done], but baldness afflicted all the children whose head he had touched, and those whose palate he had rubbed developed a lisp.[1] When the pretender provides this kind of evidence, it is not incumbent on God to expose him, because the

evidence itself is enough to give the lie to his pretensions. Moreover, such a thing is not a miracle, according to conventional usage.

Furthermore, as defined by usage, miracles do not include feats of magicians, tricksters, or masters of certain exact theoretical sciences, even if they are capable of things which others cannot accomplish. Nor is it incumbent on God to expose them when it is known that their actions are founded on magic or jugglery or some other natural factors, even if they claim a divine appointment and substantiate it by such acts of magic. This is because the exact theoretical sciences are founded on laws that are well known to the specialists. These laws will inevitably produce their results, provided they are accurately manipulated. Accordingly, the wonders of medical sciences are outside the realm of miracles, for they are actually conditional upon the constitution of the substances, notwithstanding the fact that these are unknown to the layman and, perhaps, to the medical scientists themselves.

It is not inappropriate for God to single out one of His creatures for knowledge of one of these things, even if it were a critical matter beyond the generality of people [because this scientific knowledge has no connection with a prophet's claim to divine appointment]. However, it would be inappropriate if He were to mislead the ignorant by means of their ignorance, and to allow the miracles to be wrought at the hands of an impostor, thus causing people to go astray.

The Necessity for a Prophet to Perform Miracles

It is incumbent on God, the Exalted, to impose moral-religious obligations (taklif) on the generality of people. This is a rational conclusion derived from sound rational proofs and explicit rational evidence that establish that human beings, on their path to perfection, are in need of religious-moral obligations in order to attain happiness and success in commerce. Thus, if God does not impose religious moral obligations on them, this would be either because He is unaware of their need for obligation- and God is far exalted above this ignorance; or because He desires to prevent them from attaining their perfection [through the performance of these obligations] and this miserliness is inadmissible of the Absolutely Generous One; or because He desires to impose obligations on them, but has no power to do so-and this is an incompetence which is inadmissible of the Absolutely Powerful. Therefore, it is imperative for Him to impose religious-moral obligations on humankind, and this necessity entails the requirement of a human announcer who would apprise them of the explicit and implicit forms of the religious-moral obligation that "He who perished [on that day] might perish by a clear proof [of God's sovereignty] and he who survived might survive by a clear proof [of His sovereignty]" (Qur’an 8:42).

Furthermore, this divine mediatorship is an important appointment that inevitably would have numerous pretenders and would be coveted by the vainly ambitious, with the result that the truthful among them might be confused with the false and the deceptive mistaken for a true guide. For this reason it is necessary for the claimant of this mediatorship to establish clear evidence of the truthfulness of his claim and of his trustworthiness in

conveying the divine message. This evidence cannot be a normal act that others can perform. It can only be something that exceeds the laws of nature.

A miracle is therefore a way of supporting the truthfulness of the claimant to divine appointment. This is because miracles exceed the laws of nature and therefore cannot be performed without divine providence and empowerment. If the claimant to prophethood were to be false in his claim, the divine empowerment to work miracles would then be a temptation to accept error and a support of falsehood, and this is impossible on the part of the Wise God. Therefore, a miracle wrought by a claimant must be an indication of his truthfulness and a sign of God's acceptance of his prophethood.

The preceding is a continual rule governing such matters, and is accepted without reservation by rational persons. If someone claims to be an emissary of a ruler in matters pertaining to his subjects, and if the subjects are in doubt about the truthfulness of this claim, it is first of all necessary for the claimant to produce evidence supporting his claim. It is further necessary that this evidence should be unequivocal. Hence, if the emissary tells them, "The evidence of my truthfulness is that tomorrow the king will salute me in the special manner he salutes his other emissaries," and if the king knows what has gone on between the emissary and the people, and if, further, the king salutes the emissary at the proper time in the proper manner, the king's action would thus confirm the claimant's mission, and no rational being would be able to doubt this matter. After all, it is inappropriate of a capable king, who protects the interests of his subjects, to confirm a false claimant, when the latter [by putting forward a false claim] wishes to corrupt the subjects.

If such behavior is inappropriate on the part of a rational person, it is impossible on the part of the Absolutely Wise [God]. God, the Exalted, has pointed this out in His noble Book, saying,

And if he [the Prophet] had invented false sayings concerning Us, We assuredly had taken him by the right hand and then severed his life-artery (Qur’an 69:44-46).

These verses mean that "Muhammad, whose prophethood We have affirmed, and whose veracity we have confirmed with miracles, cannot invent false sayings concerning Us. If he were to do that, then We would have taken him by the right hand and severed his life-artery. Thus, Our silence confirms what he says and precludes the insinuation of falsehoods into the sacred law of true guidance. It is incumbent upon Us to protect the sacred law when it prevails, just as it was incumbent upon Us to protect it at the time of its creation."

But a miracle's validity as evidence of the veracity of a claimant to prophethood depends on the assumption that the intellect can distinguish good from evil. However, the Ash'arites, who reject this assumption and deny that reason is capable of such a judgment, have perforce closed the door on confirming prophethood. This is one of the errors of their doctrine, for their assertion closes the door against confirming prophethood. This is because miracles are evidence of the veracity of prophethood only if it

seems improper for the mind that miracles can be wrought by a liar. If the intellect does not see the matter as such, then no one can distinguish the true prophet from the false one.

Al-Fadl b. Ruzbihan has responded to this problem by asserting that, although it is possible for God to do evil, it is however His practice to limit the working of miracles to genuine prophets, so that a miracle cannot be wrought at the hands of a liar; accordingly, the Ash'arite doctrine does not entail closing the door to belief in prophethood. The weakness and incoherence of this response is obvious, however. First, the divine practice mentioned by Ibn Ruzbihan is not one of the things that can be perceived through the senses or discerned by the eye and the ear. Therefore, the only way to knowledge in this matter is through the intellect. If the intellect were unable to differentiate between good and evil, as al-Ash'arI maintains, it would then be impossible for anyone to know definitely about divine practice.

Second, the confirmation of this divine practice depends on our faith in earlier prophets who worked miracles. By having such faith, we would know that the divine practice is to bestow the ability to work miracles exclusively on the veracious. As for those who deny the prophethood of earlier prophets, or doubt them, they have no way of establishing the divine practice affirmed by Ibn Ruzbihan, and thus the evidence of working miracles does not hold for them.

Third, if the intellect equates doing a thing with not doing it, and if it does not pass judgment as to whether this action or inaction is good or evil, what is then to prevent God from changing His practice? After all, He is the Omnipotent who does not have to account for what He does, and thus, He can, if He will, manifest miracles at the hands of a liar!

Fourth, a practice consists of contingent actions, which become a practice after regular repetition. A practice is therefore established over a period of time. Such being the case, what is the proof of the truthfulness of the first truthful prophethood before this practice was established? We will discuss the doctrine of the Ash'arites as we clarify their error.

The Best Miracles Are Those Which Best Resemble the Most Advanced Arts of the Time

A miracle, as explained above, is an occurrence that breaks the laws of nature and which other human beings cannot imitate when a prophet claimant performs it to demonstrate the truthfulness of his claim. What is beyond doubt is that a miracle can be recognized as such only by specialists in the art the miracle resembles. This is because the specialist is necessarily the most knowledgeable about the peculiarities of his art or craft, and possesses the most adequate grasp of its characteristics. Hence, he can distinguish between what human beings can do and what they cannot. Consequently, the specialists are the ones who more readily believe the miracle. The layman, in contrast, has a wider scope for doubt as long as he is ignorant about the laws of that art, and as long as there is a likelihood that the pretender had made use of laws that are known only to the specialists in that particular field. He would thus be slow to concede its veracity. It is for

this reason that divine wisdom has decided that each prophet should perform the kind of miracles that best resemble the known arts of his age, in which there are many specialists among his contemporaries, so that the miracle would be quickly believed and firmly established as evidence [for his claim].

Therefore, it was a divine wisdom that Moses (peace be upon him) should be given the [magical] staff and the [miracle-performing] white hand, for magic was wide- spread in his age and there were numerous magicians. For that reason, it was the magicians who most readily accepted his miracles as evidence of his veracity when they saw the staff turn into a serpent and "swallow that which they did falsely show," and then [saw it] returned to its original state.[2] The magicians saw this and realized that it was beyond the power of their magic, and therefore, they believed that it was a divine miracle. Thus, they declared their faith in the audience of the pharaoh [in which the incident occurred], not caring about the pharaoh's wrath and threats.

Greek medicine was widespread in the time of Jesus (peace be upon him), and the physicians of his time had accomplished wonders. Medical sciences were well established in Syria and Palestine, because these two countries were Roman colonies. Thus, when God sent His prophet Jesus to these two regions, He decided in His wisdom that the proof of Jesus should resemble the art of medicine. Hence, among the miracles worked by Jesus were the raising of the dead and the healing of the born-blind and the lepers. This was because the people in his day knew that such acts were beyond human power and were not based on medicine, and therefore must have originated from beyond the world of natural science.

As for the Arabs, they were distinguished in the art of literary style and were celebrated for the eloquence of their language. They had reached the pinnacle of literary art, to the extent that they used to hold assemblies and gatherings to compete in poetry and oration. A person [competing at these gatherings] was rated by the literary excellence of what he said. Their love for poetry was so great that they selected the seven odes, wrote them with gold water on papyrus, and hung them on the walls of the Ka'ba. Thus, it became the practice to call a person's best poem "his gilded poem."[3] Among the Arabs, both men and women were interested in literature. Al-Nabigha al-Dhabyani was the first judge [at the contests for] poets. He used to attend the fair of 'Ukaz: during its season, where a red dome of animal hide would be pitched for him. The poets used to come to him to submit their compositions for his opinion.[4] It was for this reason that the wisdom of God required that the Prophet of Islam should be endowed with the miracle of the Qur'an's clarity of expression and eloquence. Thus, the Arabs realized that this was the speech of God, and that in eloquence it is beyond human power. This was acknowledged by all Arabs who were not obstinate.

This is indicated by a narrative on the authority of Ibn al-Sukayt. He asked [the eighth Imam] Abul al-Hasan al-Rida (peace be upon him):

Why did God send Moses (peace be upon him) with the [miraculous] staff, white hands, and the power of magic, [whereas] he sent Jesus with the

power of healing and Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) with the [power of] speech and oration?

The Imam Abu al-Hasan (peace be upon him) replied:

This is because when God sent Moses (peace be upon him), what prevailed among the people of his time was magic. Thus, he brought them from God something that no one among them could perform, and which rendered their magic null and void; and with that He established the proof for them. And God sent Jesus (peace be upon him) at a time when chronic illnesses had appeared and people needed the medical sciences. Jesus brought them from God something the like of which they did not have, and by means of which he raised them from the dead, and healed the blind and the lepers, with God's leave. Thus, he established the proof for them.

And God sent Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) at a time when the art of oration and poetry was prevalent among the people of his time. Thus, he brought them from God his exhortations and his wisdom, which rendered speeches null and void, and he established his proof for them.[5]

The Prophet performed other miracles besides the Qur'an, such as splitting the moon, the serpent which spoke, and the pebbles which praised God. But the Qur'an is the greatest of these miracles, and the strongest in establishing the proof, for the Arabs, who were ignorant of the natural sciences and the mysteries of the universe, may have doubted these other miracles and attributed them to causes of whose accuracy they were ignorant. The nearest of these causes to their mind was magic, to which they would have attributed these miracles. However, they were not likely to doubt the eloquence of the Qur'an and its inimitability because they understood the techniques of eloquence and comprehended its mysteries. Moreover, those other mysteries were transitory and did not have a lasting effect. In no time they would be- come a narrative, transmitted from one generation to the next, and leaving the door wide open for doubt. But the Qur'an is here for eternity, and its miracle is continuous over the generations. I shall discuss, in particular, the miracles of the Prophet, other than the Qur'an, and thereby devote some attention to those among contemporary authors and others who deny them.

The Qur'an as a Divine Miracle

Every intelligent person to whom the call of Islam has reached knows that Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) announced to all mankind the call to accept Islam, and through the Qur'an, established for them the proof [of the claim to prophethood] and challenged them, with [the Qur'an's] inimitability, to produce its like, even by helping each other in so doing. Then he lowered this and challenged them to produce ten suras [like those in the Qur'an]. And, finally, he challenged them to produce only one sura like it.[6]

Had that been possible, it would have behooved the Arabs--especially those among them who excelled in eloquence-to take up the Prophet's challenge and invalidate his proof by matching it. Indeed, it would have behooved them to counter one sura of the Qur'an and match it in eloquence so as to invalidate the proof of this claimant who was challenging them in

their most outstanding skill and their most notable distinction. They would thus have gained a manifest victory, endless renown, and eminence in honor and position. A contest like this would have spared them wars, great expenses, separation from their homeland, and the suffering of hardship and affliction.

But the Arabs reflected on the eloquence of the Qur'an and conceded its inimitability, for they knew that they would be defeated trying to match it. Hence, some of them believed the caller to the truth and submitted to the call of the Qur'an and attained the honor of Islam. Others took the course of obduracy and chose to counter with swords rather than words, and preferred a contest of lances to a contest of eloquence. This incapacity and opposition were the ample proof that the Qur'an was a divine revelation beyond human capability.

Some ignorant non-Muslims have claimed that the Arabs matched the Qur'an and countered it with this proof, and that this contest has been forgotten because of the passage of time. The response to such a view is that this encounter, had it taken place, would have been made known by the Arabs in their gatherings and publicized at their annual fairs and markets. The enemies of Islam would have taken it for [use as] a ballad, chanting it in every gathering, repeating it on every occasion, passing it on to posterity, and guarding it as a litigant would guard his evidence. This would have been more satisfying to them than preserving the history of their ancestors. Yet, al- though pre-Islamic poetry has filled the books of history and the compendiums of literature, we do not see any trace of this encounter, nor do we hear any mention of it. This is in spite of the fact that the Qur'an challenges all humans-rather, all the jinn and humans-without limiting the challenge to any particular group. This is what God the Almighty says to those [who do not believe in the divine origin of the Qur'an]:

Say: "Verily though mankind and the jinn should assemble to produce the like of this Qur'an, they should not produce the like thereof, though they were helpers one of an- other (Qur’an 17:88).

Moreover, we see the Christians and the enemies of Islam spending enormous amounts of money to detract from the prestige of this religion and derogate its great Prophet and holy Book. They do this every year, rather, every month. Had they been able to counter the Qur'an, even by matching one sura of it, that would have served as a greater proof for them and a better means of accomplishing their aim; and they would not have needed to spend all this money and exert themselves.

Fain would they put out the light of God with their mouths, but God will perfect His light however much the rejecters of faith are averse (Qur’an 61:8).

On the other hand, a person who deals regularly and deeply with an eloquent text, would, with time, be expected to acquire the ability of matching its style, or coming close to it. This can be observed in everyday life, but does not apply to the Qur'an, for, despite frequent perusal and prolonged study, no one has been able to imitate it to any extent. This proves to us that the Qur'an has a style beyond teaching or learning. Moreover, had the Qur'an been the Prophet's own words and composition,

we would have found passages in the Prophet's orations and sayings that resemble it in style and equal it in eloquence. However, the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) and his orations that have been preserved in writing are characterized by a different style. Had there been among his sayings anything that resembles the Qur'an, it would have been widely transmitted and recorded, especially by his enemies, who wanted to harm Islam by whatever means and device. One more point to add is that customary eloquence has limits which it rarely exceeds. Well- versed Arab poets and prose writers specialize in one genre or even two and three. One may excel in hamasa (heroic) poetry, for example, but not in love poetry. The Qur'an, by contrast, dwells on numerous subjects and applies many forms of style, and in all this has excelled other writings. This versatility is impossible for human beings.

The Qur'an: An Eternal Miracle

We have seen that belief in prophethood and faith in it are only through the miracles the prophet performs as a proof of his claim. Since the prophecies of earlier prophets were limited to their own times, divine wisdom dictated that their miracles be of short duration, for they were proofs for prophecies that were to serve for a limited time. Therefore, some contemporaries of these prophets were eyewitnesses to these miracles and, hence, these miracles served as evidence for them. Others learned about these miracles by means of eyewitness accounts related without any break in transmission (tawatur); [7] hence, the miracle served as evidence for these as well.

However, in the case of the eternal Shari'a (sacred law of Islam), the miracle that attests to its truthfulness must be timeless, because if the miracle were limited and of short duration, it would not be observed by those far away. Consequently, if the transmission and reports regarding it were to be disrupted, those living far away would not be able to ascertain its truthfulness. Hence, if God were to impose on such persons the obligation to believe in this miracle, He would be imposing on them an impossible obligation. Imposing an impossible obligation is inadmissible of God. Hence, the final and lasting prophethood inevitably requires a lasting miracle. It is for this reason that God sent down the Qur'an as a lasting miracle so that it would be a proof of the truthfulness of the final and lasting prophethood. It would, as well, be a proof to posterity as it was a proof for those who preceded them. We can conclude two points from what we have said so far.

First, [there is] the superiority of the Qur'an over all other miracles which were accomplished by the past prophets, and over the other miracles which were accomplished by our Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny), because the Qur'an is lasting and timeless, and its inimitability is continuous, to be heard by all generations and to serve as proof through the centuries.

Second, the earlier sacred laws are temporary. What points to the fact that their viability has ended is that the proofs and evidence serving them have ended with the passing of the miracles which confirmed their truthfulness.

Moreover, the Qur'an has another unique characteristic that makes it superior to all the miracles performed by earlier prophets. This characteristic is that the Qur'an is responsible for the guidance of mankind[8] and for leading them to their ultimate perfection. The Qur'an is the guide that enlightened the uncouth and oppressive Arabs - they who had embraced the worst habits and worshiped the idols, and who were preoccupied with tribal warfare and the vainglorious boasting of the pre-Islamic age,[9] instead of pursuing knowledge and rectifying their souls. With the Qur'an as a guide, they became, in a very short time, a community significant in its learning and history, and superior in its customs. Whoever studies the history of Islam and probes into the biographies of the Prophet's Companions, who met their martyrdom in his presence, would realize the greatness of the Qur'an in the effectiveness of its guidance and the extensiveness of its influence. Indeed, it was the Qur'an that pulled them out of the abyss of the age of ignorance (jahiliyya, the pre-Islamic age) [and brought them] to the heights of knowledge and perfection, and made them be devoted to the cause of invigorating the Shari'a, with no regret about wealth, children, and wives they left behind.

The words of al-Miqdad to the Messenger of God, when the Messenger consulted the believers about setting out for Badr, are a fair corroboration of what we have said:

O Prophet of God, carry out what God has commanded you to do, for we are with you. By God, we shall not say what the Children of lsrael said to Moses: "Go, you and your Lord, and fight. We are slackers here" [Qur'an 5:24]. But we say: "Go, you and your Lord, and fight. Indeed, we are with you as fighters. I swear by the One who has sent you with the truth, if you march us toward Birk al-Ghimad [across the sea]"-by which al- Miqdad meant the capital of Abyssynia-"we shall endure it with you until you attain it." The Prophet of God (peace be upon him and his progeny) said kind words to him and prayed for him.[10]

Al-Miqdad was only one of the Muslims to express his belief and determination, and to dedicate himself with heart and soul in order to vitalize the truth and destroy associationism (shirk). Many Muslims were of this faith, overflowing with sincerity. Undoubtedly, it was the Qur'an that enlightened the hearts of those who had been devoted to the idols and who had engaged in tribal warfare and pre-Islamic vain-glory. It made them hard on the rejecters of faith and merciful to each other, each of them valuing his companion's life over his own. Hence, by virtue of Islam, the Muslims conquered, in eighty years, more than others conquered in eight hundred. Whoever compares the lives of the Prophet's Companions with those of earlier prophets would realize that therein lies a divine mystery, and that the beginning of this mystery is the Book of God, which shone on the souls and cleansed the hearts and the spirits with a lofty faith and a steadfast doctrine.

Look at the history of the disciples of Jesus, and at the history of other companions of the prophets, and you will see what their ways were. They abandoned their prophets under adversity and betrayed them for fear of destruction! As a result, those earlier prophets had no power over the oppressors of their time, but used to hide from them in caves and ravines.

This is the second attribute that gives the Qur'an merit over all other miracles.

Having learned from the preceding that the Qur'an is a divine miracle of eloquence and style, it should be added that its inimitability is not confined to that. Rather, it is a miracle pertaining to the Lord and a manifold proof of the prophethood of the one to whom it was revealed. It is appropriate for us at this point to present some of these aspects [of the Qur'an's inimitability], however briefly.

The Qur'an and the Forms of Knowledge

The Qur'an states in many of its verses that Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) was unlettered (ummi). The Prophet himself mentioned this openly to many of his people and clan members, among whom he had been raised. None of them denied that, and therein lies the definitive evidence of its truthfulness. Although unlettered, he nevertheless included in his Book such elements of learning as to overwhelm the minds of philosophers and baffle the thinkers in the East and the West from the emergence of Islam to this day. This Book shall remain a source of perplexity and bewilderment to thinkers until the Day of Judgment. This, indeed, is one of the greatest aspects of its miraculous inimitability.

Let us concede to the opponents of Islam the fallacy of this claim. Let us assume that Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) was not unlettered. Let us imagine him to have been tutored in forms of knowledge and to have acquired his knowledge of science and history through learning. If all this was true, does it not follow that he must have acquired his learning and specialties from the learned per- sons of his time, among whom he grew up? Yet we know that among those whom Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) grew up, the majority were idolaters whose beliefs were delusions, and who had faith in superstitions. Others included the people of the Book who obtained their knowledge, history, and laws from the books of the two Testaments, which they attributed to revelation, tracing them back to the prophets. If we were therefore to concede that Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) acquired his knowledge from his contemporaries, does it not follow that his views and his education would reflect traces of the beliefs he had acquired from his teachers and his guides about those books which were the sources of his education and knowledge? On the contrary, we find that the Qur'an is different from the two Testaments in all respects, and that it purifies the two Testaments from the delusive imagination and myths that filled the Testaments and the other sources of education at that time.

The Noble Qur'an deals, in many of its verses, with the attributes of God, the Sublime. It ascribes to Him the attributes of perfection that are appropriate to His prestige, and exalts Him above the effects of deficiency and contingency. The following are examples of what the Qur'an says:

And they say, "God has taken to Himself a son." Be He glorified. No, but whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His. All are subservient to Him. The Originator of the heavens and the earth! When He decrees a thing, He says to it only, "Be!" and it is (Qur’an 2:116- 17). Your God is One God; there is no god save Him, the Merciful, the Com- passionate (Qur’an 2:

163). God! There is no god save Him, the Ever living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and what- ever is in the earth (Qur’an 2:255). Lo! nothing in the earth or in the heavens is hidden from God. He it is who fashions you in the wombs as pleases Him. There is no god save Him, the Almighty, the Wise (Qur’an 3:5--6). Such is God, your Lord. There is no god save Him, the Creator of all things, so worship Him. And He takes care of all things. Vision comprehends Him not, but He comprehends [all] vision. He is the Subtile, the Aware (Qur’an 6: 102-3). Say: "God produces creation, then reproduces it." How, then, are you misled? (Qur’an 10:34). God it is who raised up the heavens without visible supports, then mounted the Throne, and compelled the sun and the moon to be of service; each runs to an appointed term; He orders the course; He details the revelations, that, haply, you may be certain of the meeting with your Lord (Qur’an 13:2). And He is God; there is no god save Him. His is all praise in the former and the latter [states], and His is the command, and to Him you shall be brought back (Qur’an 28:70). He is God, than whom there is no other god, the Knower of the invisible and the visible. He is the Merciful, the Compassionate. He is God, there is no god but He, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, the [Giver of] Peace, the Keeper of Faith, the Guardian, the Majestic, the Compeller, the Superb. Glorified is God from all that they ascribe [to Him]! He is God, the Creator, the Shaper out of nothing, the Fashioner; His are the most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise (Qur’an 55:22-24).

Thus does the Qur'an describe the God of the Universe and bear the knowledge which is guided by clear evidence and which accords with sound reasoning. Is it possible that an unlettered person growing up in an ignorant environment will bring forth such lofty knowledge?

The Qur'an, moreover, mentions the prophets and ascribes to them all the good traits appropriate to them, and attributes to them all the glorious deeds which attend the sanctity of prophethood and the righteousness of divine deputyship. The following are examples of these verses:

[And ordain good in this world and in the Hereafter for] those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they will find described in the Torah and the Gospel [which are] with them. He will enjoin on them that which is right and forbid them that which is wrong. He will make lawful for them all good things and prohibit for them only the foul (Qur’an 7: 157). He it is who has sent among the unlettered ones a Messenger of their own, to recite to them His revelations and to make them grow, and to teach them the Book and wisdom, though heretofore they were indeed in error manifest (Qur’an 62:2). And lo! yours verily will be reward unfailing. And lo! you are of a tremendous nature (Qur’an 68:3--4). Indeed, God has favored Adam, Noah, and the family of Abraham and 'Imran above all His creatures (Qur’an 3:33). And when Abraham said to his father and his folk: "Lo! I am innocent of what you worship, save Him who did create me, for He will surely guide me" (Qur’an 43:26-27). Thus did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, that he might be of those possessing certainty (Qur’an 6:76). And We bestowed upon him Isaac

and Jacob; each one of them We guided; and Noah did We guide aforetime; and of his seed [We guided] David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron. Thus do We reward the good. And Zechariah and John and Jesus and Elias. Each one of them was of the righteous. And Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot. Each one of them did We prefer above [Our] creatures. With some of their forefathers and their offspring and their brethren; and We chose them and guided them to the straight path (Qur'an 85:88). And We verily gave knowledge to David and Solomon, and they said: "Praise be to God, who preferred us above many of His believing servants" (Qur'an 27: 15). And make mention of Ishmael and Elisha and Dhil al-Kifl. All are from the chosen (Qur'an 38:48). These are they to whom God showed favor from among the prophets, of the seed of Adam and of those whom we carried [in the ship] with Noah, and of the seed of Abraham and Israel, and from among those whom We guided and chose. When the revelations of the All-Merciful were recited to them, they fell down adoring and weeping (Qur'an 19:58).

These are a few of the verses which the Qur'an brought forth to free the prophets from any blemished record and [to establish] their sanctity and to show them in their true holiness, righteousness, and good remembrance.

As for the two Testaments, they, too, mention and describe the prophets, but how they describe them, and to what lowly level do they reduce these godly emissaries! Here are some examples.

1. The Torah relates, in the first and second chapters of Genesis, the story of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from paradise.[11] It mentions that God permitted Adam to eat of all the fruits except the fruits of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And God said to him: "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen. 2: 16-17). Then God created from Adam his wife Eve and they were both naked in paradise, for they did not know good from evil. Then the serpent came and guided them to the tree [of knowledge] and enticed them to eat of its fruit and said: "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5-6). When they ate from this tree, their eyes opened and they realized that they were naked and they made for themselves loincloths. When the Lord saw them while He was walking in paradise, Adam and Eve hid away from him. Hence, God called out, "Where are you, O Adam?" Adam said, "I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself" (Gen. 3: 11). At that, God said, "Who told you that you were naked?" (Gen. 3: 12). Having learned that Adam had eaten from the tree, God said: "Behold, man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"-therefore the Lord God sent him forth (Gen. 3:22). Hence, God drove him out of paradise and, at the east side of it, He placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way leading to the tree of life. And, it is mentioned in the ninth verse of the twelfth chapter that the serpent was called Iblis and Satan, who leads the whole world astray.

This is how the revealed scriptures ascribe to the Holy God that He lied to Adam and deceived him about the tree, then was afraid that he would acquire everlasting life and challenge Him in the freedom of His kingdom. Therefore, He drove him out of the garden of Eden. Moreover, the account says that God is a corporeal being who walks in paradise and is ignorant [of] where Adam hid from him; and that Satan, the misleader, advised Adam and brought him from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge, and helped him understand good and evil.

2. Chapter 12 of Genesis mentions that Abraham claimed before the pharaoh that Sarah was his sister, and concealed that she was his wife. Thus, the pharaoh took her for her beauty and "for her sake he dealt well with Abraham; and he had sheep, oxen, he-asses, menservants, and maidservants, she-asses, and camels" (Gen. 12:16). When the pharaoh discovered that Sarah was Abraham's wife and not his sister, he said to him: "Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife?" (Gen. 12:19-20). Then the pharaoh returned Sarah to Abraham.

The implication of this story is that Abraham was the cause of the pharaoh's taking his wife as his own, and-God forbid-that Abraham, who is one of the noblest of the prophets of God, should do something even an ordinary person would not do.

3. Chapter 19 of Genesis relates the story of [what happened to] Lot and his two daughters when he went out of Zo'ar and dwelled in the hills. In this story, the elder daughter told her sister: "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come into us after the manner of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring through our father" (Gen. 19:33). Thus, they made their father drink wine that night, and the older girl lay with him. The following night they also made him drink wine, and the younger girl lay with him; and both girls became pregnant. The older girl bore a son and named him Moab, and he is the father of the Moabites to this day. The younger also bore a son, and called him Ben Ammi; and he is the father of the Ammonites to this day. This is what the current Torah ascribes to the Prophet Lot and his daughters, and let the reader reflect on it and make his decision.

4. Chapter 27 of Genesis relates that Isaac wished to bestow upon his son Esau the blessing of the prophethood. But Jacob [his other son], deceived him and made him believe that he was Esau, and offered him food and wine. Isaac ate and drank. Thus, with the help of such tricks and many falsehoods, Jacob was able to obtain the blessing of God. And Isaac told him: "Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be every- one who blesses you!" (Gen. 27:29). When Esau came, he knew that his brother Jacob had usurped the blessing of the prophethood, and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" But he said, "Your brother came with guile, and he has taken away your blessing." Then Esau said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" Isaac answered Esau: "Behold, I have made him your lord, and all his brothers I have given to him for servants, and with grain and

wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son?" Esau lifted up his voice and wept (Gen. 27:35-38).

This usurpation of prophethood: Is it something that makes sense? And does God bestow His prophethood on a deceptive liar, and withhold it from its rightful owner? Could Jacob deceive God as he deceived Isaac, and was God later unable to restore the prophethood to its rightful owner? God is far too exalted for that. Perhaps the intoxication with wine was the reason for writing this nonsense and attributing wine- drinking to Isaac.

5. Chapter 38 of Genesis relates that Judah, son of Jacob, committed adultery with his son Er's wife, named Tamar, and that she conceived by him and gave birth to the twins Perez and Zerah (Gen. 38: 13-30). Moreover, chapter [1] of the Gospel of Matthew records the full genealogy of Jesus Christ and traces the ancestry of Jesus and Solomon and his father, David, to Perez (who was born from the adulterous act of Judah and his daughter-in-law, Tamar).

God forbade His prophets to be born through adultery. How can anyone ascribe to them a birth through adultery with a woman they were legally forbidden to have! However, the author of the current Torah was unconcerned about what he wrote and said!

6. Chapters 11 and 12 of 2 Samuel note that David committed adultery with the wife of Uri' ah, the believer and warrior for the faith. She became pregnant from this act of adultery, and David feared a scandal. To conceal the matter from Uri'ah, he sent for him and ordered him to enter his house. Uri'ah refused, saying: 'The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing" (2 Sam. 11:11). When David despaired of covering up the matter, he kept Uri'ah with him that day and invited him to eat. Uri'ah ate with him and drank and David made him get drunk. In the morning, David wrote to Joab: "Set Uri'ah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die" (2 Sam. 1 1: 16). Joab did that and Uri'ah was slain, and Joab sent a messenger to David to inform him about it. David thus brought Uri'ah's wife to his house, and she became his wife after her mourning for [Uri'ah] ended. Chapter 1 of Matthew re- lates that Solomon, son of David, was born of that woman.

Imagine how the writer of this account has transgressed against God, and how these deeds can be ascribed to anyone with a modicum of decency and religious zeal, let alone a prophet of God! And [imagine] how such a tale can be reconciled with the assertion, in the Gospel of Luke, that Christ sits on the throne of David, his father!

7. Chapter 11 of the Book of 1 Kings relates that Solomon had seven hundred wives of high rank, and three hundred concubines. The women turned his heart to other gods. "For Solomon went after Ash'toreth, the goddess of the Sido'nians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. . . . And the Lord was angry with Solomon . . . and said, 'I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant'" (1 Kings 11:4-12).

Chapter 23 of 2 Kings relates that the tall structures that Solomon built for Ash'toreth, the abomination of the Sido'nians, and for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites, were defiled by King Josi'ah, who broke the images and tore down the pillars. He did similar things to all the other structures of the idolaters.

Assuming that it is not necessary for a prophet to be divinely guided against error- although the rational proofs do establish this inerrancy-is it reasonably admissible for him to worship idols and build them lofty structures, and then invite people to affirm the oneness of God, and to worship Him? Never!

8. Chapter 1of Hosea relates that Hosea was the first person to whom the Lord spoke. The Lord said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry, for the land commits great harlotry by forsaking the Lord." So, Hosea went and took Gomer, the daughter of Dibla'im, and she conceived and bore him two sons and a daughter (Hos. 1:3). Chapter 3 relates that the Lord said to Hosea, "Go again, love a woman who is the beloved of a paramour and is an adulteress; even as the Lord loves the people of Israel" (Hos. 3: 1-2).

Is this God's way, commanding His prophet to commit adultery and to love an adulteress? Exalted is He above that. It is no surprise that the author [of the Book of Hosea] did not perceive the evil in [such an attribution]. What is surprising is that the civilized nations and modern scholars, who are skillful investigators of the Torah in its current form, and well informed about the myths it contains, can still believe that the Torah is a divine revelation and a heavenly book. Yes, indeed, blind imitation of one's ancestors is like a second instinct, difficult to renounce in order to follow the truth and the reality. God is the Guide, and the Giver of Success.

9. Chapter 12 of the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 3 of Mark, and chapter 8 of Luke relate that, while Christ was speaking to the people, his mother and brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him [about it], "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said: "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in the heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. 12:46-50).

Consider these words and think of their absurdity. Christ chides his holy and pious mother and forbids her to see him, and he makes light of her and prefers his disciples to her. And those disciples are the ones to whom Christ once said: "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" (Mark 4:41); and [Christ] described their faith as having "the weight of a mustard seed" (Matt. 17:21). These were the disciples whom Christ had asked to spend the night with him when he was attacked by the Jews, but they declined. So when it was made to appear that the Jews detained him, his disciples-all of them-left him and deserted him, as related in chapter 26 of the Gospel of Matthew. [12] Such are the abominable acts which the Gospels have ascribed to them.

10. Chapter 2 of John relates that Christ came to a wedding party, and [at the party] they ran out of wine; but he miraculously produced for them stone jars of wine. Chapter 11 of Matthew and chapter 7 of Luke relate that Christ

used to drink wine, that he was even a habitual drinker, "drinking a lot of wine."

Far is the sanctity of Christ from this false accusation. Chapter 10 of the Book of Leviticus relates that the Lord said to Aaron: "Drink no wine, nor strong drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tent of the meeting, lest you die; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean" (Lev. 10:8-11). Chapter 1 of Luke relates in praise of John the Baptist that "he will be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink" (Luke 1:15). This and other statements in the two Testaments demonstrate that they prohibited wine-drinking. These are but a few examples of the absurdities and fallacies, errors and inaccuracies, of the existing forms of the two Testaments that are neither congruent with reasoning nor compatible with correct logic. We have presented these to the reader so that he should study them carefully, and let his reasoning and conscience be the judge. Is it possible to surmise that Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) derived his learning, and took the content of his Noble Qur'an, from these absurdities, when the Qur'an is such a repository of lofty knowledge and firm teachings? Moreover, is it possible to maintain that these bizarre books are a heavenly revelation when they tarnish the sanctity of the prophets, as mentioned in those sections we cited above and those we have not? [13]

The Qur'an and the Integrity of Elucidation

Every rational person with experience and knowledge about the course of events knows that whoever bases his laws and reports on falsehood and calumny is bound to be self-contradictory and inconsistent. This would be more particularly the case if he embarks upon the numerous important issues of legislation, of human society and doctrine, and of the ethical systems based on intricate principles and firm foundations, and especially so if time passes by while this slanderer is at work. Yes, indeed, he is bound to fall into contradiction and incoherence, whether intentionally or not. This is because such is the requirement of deficient human nature when it is devoid of guidance. It is said in a famous proverb, "A liar does not have a memory."

The Qur'an deals with various matters and expands on them to the extent necessary. It deals with theological issues and with matters treating the prophecies. It has established the fundamentals of knowledge of jurisprudence, of the political and social order, and ethical principles. It also deals with other matters, related to astronomy, history, and the rules of war and peace. It describes celestial and terrestrial existents such as the angels, the stars, the winds, seas, and vegetation, and the animals and human beings. It also treats various parables and reveals information about the horrors of the Day of Resurrection and the place of assembly. In all this, it contains no contradiction, nor even the most minor inconsistency; nor does it depart from principles that are acceptable to reason and to rational persons. At times, it relates one episode twice or even more [times], yet not the slightest incoherence or contradiction occurs. Take, for instance, the story of Moses. It is repeated several times in the Qur'an; and, in every

instance, one finds a distinguishing feature, yet without any inconsistency in its essential signification.

If, further, one were to consider that the verses were revealed intermittently, in segments related to different occasions, one would realize that the Qur'an is the spirit of God's command. This is because lack of continuity entails, by its very nature, discord and lack of uniformity when the parts are put together. But we find that the Qur'an is a miracle in both conditions. It was revealed in intermittent segments, yet was miraculous when it was in that condition; and when it was collected, it attained another miracle. This type of miracle is alluded to in the following verse revealed by God:

Will they not then ponder on the Qur'an? If it had been from other than God, they would have found therein much inconsistency (Qur’an 4:82).

This verse guides people to a thing they discern through their innate disposition, and perceive through their natural instinct, namely, that a person who depends on falsehood and calumny in his call would inevitably be incoherent in his speech and contradictory in his elucidation. Such a thing does not occur in the Book of God [the Qur'an].

The Qur'an followed this course in many of its deductions and arguments. It directs people to heed the judgment of their innate disposition, and refers them to their instinct. This is the most effective way of guidance. The Arabs sensed this rectitude in the methods [of guidance in] the Qur'an, and the knowledgeable in language among them were convinced by that. The words of al-Walid b. al-Mughira, describing the Qur'an, explain this for us. He said, on being asked, by Abu Jahl, to say what he thought of the Qur'an:

What should I say about it? By God, there is no one among you who is more knowledgeable than me in poetry or who is more conversant than me in the rajaz meter of poetry,[14] or [in] the odes, or the poetry composed by the jinn. I solemnly declare that it [the Qur'an] does not contain anything that resembles any of this [that I know about]. By God, it is the most refined speech; it demolishes what is inferior to it, and it surely surpasses but cannot be surpassed.

Abu Jahl said, "By God, your people will not be satisfied until you talk about it." To this, al-Walid said, "Then give me time to think about it." After thinking, he said, "This is magic which has been related to him on the authority of someone else." [15]

In another version, al-Walid is reported to have said:

By God, I have heard from him a discourse that is neither the words of humans nor of jinn. It is indeed the most refined speech; it has elegance; the loftiest of it is most fruitful, and the basest is most bountiful. Indeed, it surpasses without being surpassed, and this has not been said by a human being. [16]

Ione wishes to appreciate [the inimitability of the Qur'an], he should study other scriptures ascribed to divine revelation. You will find them incongruent in meaning, disarrayed in style, neither convincing nor firmly connected. When one examines the two Testaments and the confusion and inconsistencies they contain, the matter becomes obvious and truth becomes

evident from falsehood. At this juncture, we will mention examples of the inconsistencies in the Gospels.

1. Chapter 12 of Matthew and chapter 11 of Luke relate that Christ said, "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Matt. 12:31). [In contrast], in chapter 9 of Mark and chapter 9 of Luke, Christ says that "he that is not against you is for you" (Mark 9:50).

2. Chapter 19 of Matthew, chapter 10 of Mark, and chapter 18 of Luke say that some people addressed Christ as "good teacher." To this he replied, "Why do you call me good?; no one is good but God alone" (Mark 10:17-18); whereas, in chapter 10 of John, he is said to have replied, "I am the good shepherd. . . . I am the good shepherd" (John 10:12, 15).

3. Chapter 27 of Matthew says that the two robbers who were crucified with Christ reviled him. Chapter 23 of Luke relates that one of the two criminals who were hung on the crosses railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us." The other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence and condemnation?" (Luke 23:39-40).

4. In chapter 5 of John, [Christ] says, "If I bear witness to myself, my testimony is not true" (John 5:32). In chapter 8 of this Gospel, however, he says, "Even if I do bear witness to myself, my testimony is true, for I know whence I have come" (John 8:14).

These are but a few examples of the inconsistencies and contradictions in the Gospels, despite the fact that they are small in size. There is enough in them for anyone seeking the truth and avoiding fanaticism and obstinacy.[17]

The Legislative System of the Qur'an

Anyone who studies history will be aware of the extent of ignorance of people before Islam, and the low level to which their knowledge and morality had sunk.[18] Barbarism prevailed among them; raiding and aggression were interminable; the people were inclined toward plunder and were ever ready to rush into searing wars and conflicts. The Arabians had their large share of mythology and uncivilized conduct. No religion united them, and no system bound them together. Inherited customs determined their lifestyle. Idolaters constituted the majority of the population in Arabia. Every clan and tribe had gods whom they worshiped and took as intercessors with God. Swearing by the idols (anab) and divining arrows (azlam) prevailed among them [cf. Qur’an 5:3, 90], as well as games of chance.[19] Games of chance were indeed a source of boasting. Among their other customs was the marrying of widows to their foster sons. An even more abominable custom was the wa'd-the burying alive of their infant girls.[20]

These are some Arabian customs in the Age of Ignorance (jahiliyya). When the light of Muhammad emerged, and the sun of Islam rose in Mecca, they received enlightenment from the Qur'anic truths and acquired good morality. Hence, they substituted faith in divine oneness for idolatry, knowledge for ignorance, virtues for vices, brotherhood and harmony for dissension and disagreement. Consequently, they became a community with strong bonds, which stretched the wings of its might over the world and raised the standards of civilization in the regions of the earth. According to

Muhammad Farid Wajdi, Dourri, one of the old French ministers, has commented as follows:

After the emergence of him [the Prophet], who united the Arab tribes into one nation with one aim, a great nation emerged, whose possessions stretched from the Tagus River in Spain to the Ganges in India, raising the beacons of civilization in all regions of the world. These were the days, in the Middle Ages, when Europe was swathed in the darkness of the ignorance of its peoples.

He then adds:

Of all the peoples of the Middle Ages, they [the Muslims] monopolized the sciences, and it was because of them that the clouds of barbarism in Europe were dispelled, after they had gathered for centuries as a result of the breakdown of order following the barbaric invasions.

Indeed, all this resulted from the teachings of the Book of God, which excels all heavenly books. This is because the Qur'anic legislative system and its teachings conform with manifest truths and sound reasoning. The Qur'an follows the path of justice and avoids excess and neglect. Thus, one observes that in the Opening Chapter ("Surat al-Fatiha"), the Qur'an prays to God, in the words of mankind, for guidance to the straight path: "Guide us to the straight path" (Qur’an 1:6).

This sentence, though brief and concise in words, has a broad and far-reaching signification. We shall, God willing, explain this when we comment on this noble verse later.

The Qur'an enjoins justice and the middle course in many of its passages. It says:

Lo, God commands you that you restore deposits to their owners, and, if you judge between mankind, that you judge justly (Qur’an 4:58). Deal justly; that is nearer to your duty (Qur’an 5:8). And if you give your word, do justice thereto even though it be [against] a kinsman (Qur’an 6: 152). Lo, God enjoins justice and kindness, and giving to kinsfolk, and forbids lewdness and abomination and wickedness. He exhorts you in order that you may take heed (Qur’an 16:90).

Certainly, the Qur'an enjoined justice, and its teachings are in accordance with moral integrity. Accordingly, it admonishes in many places against miserliness, apprising people of its evil consequences:

And let not those who hoard up that which God has bestowed upon them of His bounty think that it is better for them. No, it is worse for them. That which they hoard will be their collar on the Day of Resurrection. To God belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth. God is informed of what you do (Qur’an 3: 180).

At the same time, the Qur'an admonishes against extravagance and squandering and points to their evils:

And be not prodigal. Lo, God loves not the prodigals (Qur’an 6: 141). Lo, the squanderers were ever brothers of the devils. And keep not your hand chained to your neck, nor outspread it widespread altogether, lest you sit down rebuked, denuded (Qur’an 17:28-29).

The Qur'an enjoins perseverance under adversity and forbearance in times of misfortune. It praises the patient and promises them a great reward:

Verily the steadfast will be paid their wages without stint (Qur’an 39: 10). And God loves the steadfast (Qur’an 3:146).

In addition to this, the Qur'an does not shackle the oppressed person. Rather, it permits him to retaliate against his oppressor in equal measure. This is in order to put an end to corruption and uphold the rule of justice:

And one who attacks you, attack him in the like manner as he attacked you (Qur’an 2: 194).

It also permits the heir of the willfully slain to punish the killer:

Whoever is slain wrongfully, We have given power to his heir, but let him not commit excess in slaying (Qur’an 17:33).

By seeking moderation and prescribing rectitude, the Qur'an combines a good system for the life of this world and for the next, and provides what puts the former to right and ensures happiness in the latter. For, it is the Great Law; the Prophet brought it [so] that, with it, mankind would attain happiness [in this world and the next]. Its laws are not entirely worldly, with no regard to the hereafter, as is the case with the current version of the Torah. The latter, despite its large size, is devoid of any reference to the Day of Resurrection; nor does it inform [its followers] about the next world, where good and evil deeds will be recompensed. On the contrary, the Torah says clearly that obedience to God results in wealth in this world and power over people through their subjugation, while disobedience and falling in the eyes of the Lord lead to death and loss of wealth and power.

On the other hand, the laws of the Qur'an are not entirely otherworldly, failing to organize worldly affairs, as in the case of the Gospel. Qur'anic law is a complete legal system, which looks after the good in this life as well as in the one to come. Thus, it teaches:

Whoever obeys God and His Messenger, He will make him enter Gardens underneath which rivers flow, where such will dwell forever. That will be the great success. And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger and transgresses His limits, He will make him enter Fire, where such will dwell forever; his will be a shameful doom (Qur’an 4: 13-14). And whoever does good [worth] an atom's weight will see it then. And whoever does ill [worth] an atom's weight will see it then (Qur’an 99:7-8). But seek the abode of the hereafter in that which God has given you and neglect not your portion of the world, and be you kind even as God has been kind to you, and seek not corruption in the earth; lo, God loves not corrupters (Qur’an 28:77).

In many of its verses, the Qur'an urges people to seek knowledge and to observe one's duty to God, while allowing them to enjoy the pleasures of life and all that is good:

Say: "Who has forbidden the adornment of God, which He has brought forth for His bondmen, and the good things of His providing?" (Qur’an 7:32)

The Qur'an frequently calls people to the worship of God, and urges them to ponder those of His signs that are connected with revelation and creation. It invites human beings to reflect on what they observe in the horizons and in themselves. Yet, it does not limit itself to the path which leads man to

God: It also deals with the other aspects of his life that bind him to his fellow humans. Thus, it makes it lawful for him to engage in trade:

God permits trading and forbids usury (Qur'an 2:275), and orders him to honor his promises:

O, you who believe! Fulfill your undertakings (Qur'an 5: 1).

It commands marriage, which, alone, ensures the survival of the human species: And marry such of you as are solitary and the pious of your slaves and maidservants.

If they be poor, God will enrich them of His bounty. God is of ample means, aware (Qur'an 24:32). Marry of the women who seem good to you, two or three or four; and if you fear that you cannot do justice [to so many], then one [only] (Qur'an 4:3).

It commands men to deal kindly with their wives and take care of their needs; it commands all people to act rightly toward their parents and kindred, and toward all Muslims-indeed, toward all humankind. Thus, the Qur'an says:

But consort with them in kindness (Qur'an 4: 19). And the [women] have rights as obligations similar to those [of men] in kindness (Qur'an 2:228). And serve God. Ascribe nothing as partner to him. [Show] kindness to parents, and to near kindred, and the orphans, and the needy, and to the neighbor who is not of kin, and the fellow-traveler and the wayfarer and [the slaves] whom your right hand possesses. Lo, God loves not such as are proud and boastful (Qur'an 4:36). Be thus kind even as God has been kind to you, and seek not corruption in the earth; lo, God loves not corrupters (Qur'an 28:77). Lo, the mercy of God is nigh to the good (Qur'an 7:56). And do good. Lo, God loves the beneficent (Qur'an 2: 195).

These are but a few examples of the teachings of the Qur'an in which moderation is enjoined. They made it obligatory for all members of the community to enjoin what is right and admonish against what is wrong, without restriction to any particular group or specific individuals. By legislating this conduct, the Qur'an opens the door wide for its teachings to spread, and breathes in them the spirit of life and continuance. It makes every member of the family and the neighborhood a guide for the rest and a guardian over them; rather, it makes every Muslim a guide and watchman over all other Muslims, to lead them to the straight path and restrain them from committing acts of injustice and corruption. Accordingly, all Muslims are individually obligated to convey the Qur'anic ordinances and implement them. Can anyone imagine any- thing stronger and more effective than this army? Rulers exercise their will over their subjects with the power of their armies, but it is obvious that these armies cannot keep close watch over the subjects in all places and at all times. How great is the difference between the army of Islam and the armies of the rulers!

One of the teachings of the Qur'an that has been most consequential in uniting the word of Muslims and consolidating their ranks is the tenet of brotherhood among all classes of Muslims, and the repudiation of all distinctions except those of knowledge and godliness (taqwa). Thus, the Qur'an says:

Lo, the Noblest of you, in the sight of God, is the best in conduct (Qur’an 49: 13). Say [to them, O Muhammad]: "Are those who know equal with those who know not?" (Qur’an 39:9).

The Prophet once said:

Verily, God, the Exalted and Glorious, has honored those who were servile during the Age of Ignorance (pre-Islamic period). Through Islam, God removed the haughtiness of the Age of Ignorance and its vainglorious custom of boasting of kinsfolk and noble descent. Today, all the people, be they white, black, Qurayshite,[21] Arab or non-Arab, are seen to be descendants of Adam. And, assuredly, God created Adam from clay, and the people most beloved by God on the Day of Resurrection are the most obedient and most godly among them.[22]

He also said:

The excellence of all learned persons over all other people is similar to my excellence over the lowliest among you.[23]

Hence, Islam allowed Salman the Persian to advance, through the purity of his faith, to the extent of becoming a member of the Prophet's household (ahl al-bayt), whereas it humbled Abu Lahab, the Prophet's uncle, for his rejection of faith.

The Prophet of Islam did not pride himself over his people because of his clan, noble descent, or any of the other things that were generally considered a reason for self-esteem in his time. Rather, he called the people to believe in God and the Day of Resurrection, and to affirm oneness of God and unity among the people. It is for this reason that he gained power over a community that used to pride itself on noble lineage with hearts full of dissension and hypocrisy. Consequently, he influenced its character in such a way that he eliminated false pride and arrogance, to the point that a wealthy person of high lineage would give his daughter in marriage to a poor Muslim, even though [one] of a lowly descent.[24]

This is the way of the Qur'an in its guidance and teachings. It seeks the interest of the individual as well as the welfare of society, and has imposed such laws that would guarantee all this, some of them related to this world and others to the hereafter. With all this, can a rational person doubt the prophet hood of the man who came with this great sacred law, particularly when he considers that the Prophet of Islam grew up among an uncivilized community that had no knowledge of these teachings?

The Precision of Expression in the Qur'an

The Qur'an deals with a large number of varied topics, from theology to the branches of knowledge; from genesis to the return for the final judgment; from metaphysical subjects, like the spirit, the angels, lblis, and the jinn, to worldly subjects, like astronomy, the Earth, history, and the lives of earlier prophets and what took place between them and their communities. It also deals with proverbs, proofs, and ethics; the rights of the family; politics and the public order, and laws of war; divine decree and predestination; the acquisition of responsibility for one's actions and free will; the forms of worship; human transactions; the laws of marriage and divorce; religious and moral obligations; legal penalties and laws of retribution; and so on. In all these subjects, the Qur'an brought lasting truths

that will never lose their perfect applicability and relevance, nor become open to criticism in any respect; nor can falsehood come to them from before them or behind them [cf. Qur’an 41:42]. Those are things which are normally beyond human achievement-particularly if someone grew up in an ignorant community that had no knowledge of religious truths or any other areas of learning.

Accordingly, we find that, whoever writes on a theoretical subject, the error of many of his views will become obvious not long after his work is completed. This is because the longer that theoretical subjects are researched the clearer do the facts become. Later generations discover things which are different from those established by their predecessors. As the saying goes, reality is the offspring of research; and, indeed, the predecessors have left so much for later generations to discover. Because of this, we find that the books of ancient philosophers, and of the researchers and theoreticians who came after them, became the object of criticism of subsequent generations, to the extent that some of the things that the earlier generations believed to be absolute evidence turned out, after critical evaluation, to be delusions and fantasies.

But the Qur'an, despite its numerous objectives and exalted meanings and the passage of time, has not been found wanting in anything that makes it vulnerable to criticism and objection, except for those fallacies of some presumptuous individuals, who regard what they say as criticism. We shall turn to these and expose their fallacious assumptions, God willing.

Information about Hidden Matters in the Qur'an

In a number of places, the Qur'an gives information about some important issues connected with future reports and events. Unquestionably, all the things it foretold were proved correct, diverting in no way from reality. This is, evidently, information about concealed matters, which cannot be communicated except through revelation and prophecy. One of the verses that told about the hidden future is God's saying:

And [remember] when God promised you one of the two bands [of the enemy], that it should be yours and you longed that [a band] other than the armed one might be yours. And God willed that He should cause the Truth to triumph by His word, and cut the root of the rejecters of faith (Qur’an 8:7).

This verse was revealed concerning the battle of Badr. In it God promises the believers to give them victory over their enemy and to eradicate the rejecters. This was promised the believers though they were few in number and badly equipped, to the extent that the only rider among them was al-Miqdad [who had a horse]-or maybe it was al-Zubayr b. al-'Awwam-whereas the rejecters of faith were numerous and well equipped. Indeed, the verse describes their enemy as the "armed one," and the believers were afraid to fight them. But God willed "that He should cause the Truth to triumph by His word." Thus, God fulfilled His promise to the believers, and gave them a victory over their enemy and cut the source of the unbelievers.

In another verse, God says:

So proclaim that which you are commanded, and renounce the idolaters. Lo! We defend you from the scoffers, who set some other god along with God. But they will come to know (Qur'an 15:94-96).

These verses were revealed in Mecca in the early days of Islam. The circumstances of their revelation have been explained in a tradition reported by al-Bazzaz and al-Tabari, as related by Anas b. Malik, who said that they were revealed when the Prophet was passing among some people of Mecca. They taunted him behind his back, saying, "This is the person who claims that he is a prophet and that Gabriel supports him."[25] Thus, the verses spoke about the triumph of the Prophet's mission, and said that God shall give him victory, and shall defeat the unbelievers who had opposed him and mocked his claim to prophethood, and had treated him contemptuously. This was at a time when no one imagined that the Quraysh would decline in power and lose its authority, and that the Prophet would be able to defeat them.

A similar verse is God's saying:

He it is who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it conqueror of all religions, however much the unbelievers may be averse (Qur'an 61:9).

Still another prophecy is God's saying:

The Romans have been defeated in the nearer land,[26] and they, after their defeat, will be victorious (Qur'an 30:2-3).

What this verse prophesied happened within less than ten years. Thus, the Byzantine monarch was victorious, and his army entered the land of the Persians.

Another prophecy is God's saying:

Or they say: "We are a host victorious?" The hosts will all be routed and will turn and flee (Qur'an 54:44-45).

Thus, God informed [the Prophet] about the defeat which was to be incurred on the rejecters of faith, that they shall disperse and their dominion shall be suppressed.

This prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Badr, when Abu Jahl spurred his horse and raced it to the front line, saying, "We will gain a victory over Muhammad (peach upon him and his progeny) and his companions." But God destroyed him and his troops, and clarified the truth and raised its beacon and promoted its message. Hence, the rejecters of faith were routed, and the Muslims triumphed over them at a time when no one even imagined that 313 men, without equipment, and with only one or two horses and some seventy camels, would defeat a large and well-equipped horde. How could that handful of people overcome such a large number so that their power was scattered like ashes blown by the wind, if it had not been for the command of God, the accuracy of the prophecy, and the truthfulness of the intentions?

Another verse of this type is God's saying:

The power of Abu Lahab will perish, and he will perish. His wealth and gains will not exempt him. He will be plunged into flaming fire, and his wife, the wood-carrier, will have around her neck a halter of palm fiber (Qur'an 111:1-5).

This verse discloses the information that Abu Lahab and his wife shall enter the Fire. In other words, it foretells that they shall die without accepting Islam, and this is what actually happened.

The Qur'an and the Mysteries of the Creation

The Qur'an speaks, in more than one of its verses, about the order of the universe, the laws of nature, the celestial bodies, and other subjects that could not be understood at the beginning of Islam, except through divine revelation. Although some of these laws were known to the ancient Greeks and other nations of that time that had had prior experience with the sciences, the Arabian Peninsula was far from knowing about them. Moreover, some of the things which the Qur'an informed about did not become known till after scientific learning had advanced and discoveries multiplied. This type of information abounds in the Qur'an and we shall treat them in our exegesis of the relevant verses, God willing.

The Qur'an was judicious in disclosing these matters. It disclosed them when it was appropriate to do that, and alluded to them when that was more commendable. The reason is that some of these matters were hard to accept for the minds of the people of that time; therefore, it was prudent that they should be alluded to in a way which would become clear for the people of future ages, when science would have progressed and discoveries would have proliferated.

One of the mysteries that were uncovered by the Qur'an, and to which later scholars drew attention, is contained in the following verse:

And the earth have We spread out, and placed therein firm hills and caused each thing to grow therein, well proportioned (Qur'an 15:19).

This passage points to the fact that everything that grows in the earth has a specific weight. It has been established lately that each species of vegetation is made up of particular parts, each with a specific weight. If any change of weight were to occur in the parts of the plant, it would become a different organism. Furthermore, the proportional relationship between the various parts of a single plant is so minute that it is impossible to measure them accurately even with the most sophisticated equipment known to man.

One of the strange mysteries to which the Qur'an has alluded is that some species of trees and plants need pollination through the wind in order to blossom. In this regard, God the Exalted says:

And we send the winds [for] pollination (Qur'an 15:22).

Although the early exegetes of the Qur'an understood the word liqa ("pollination") in this verse to mean "carrying," which is [indeed] one of its meanings, and, accordingly interpreted the holy verse as "the winds carrying the clouds" or "the rain which the clouds carry," the indications are that this is not the main purport of the verse, particularly since the winds do not carry the clouds but drive them from place to place.

The correct way to view this verse, as based on the scientific discoveries made by botanists, is that it conveys an intricate mystery that the ancients were unable to fathom-namely, that trees and plants need pollination in order to blossom. This pollination occurs by means of the wind, as it happens with apricots, pine nuts, pomegranates, citrus, cotton, grains, and so

on. Thus, when the pollens mature, the sacs open up, and they are scattered in the air, carried by the winds, then falling randomly on other buds.

God, the Exalted and Glorified, also points out that the law of coupling is not limited to animals; it applies as well to plants of various species. He says:

And of all fruits He placed therein two spouses [male and female] (Qur'an 13:3). Glory be to Him who created all the sexual pairs, that of which the Earth grows, and that of which they know not! (Qur'an 36:36).

Among the unknown things that were unveiled by the Qur'an is the movement of the Earth. In this respect, God, the Almighty, says:

[It is God] who has appointed the Earth as a cradle (Qur'an 20:53).

Note the subtle way that this verse alludes to the movement of the Earth, which did not become clear until many centuries later. It describes the Earth figuratively as a cradle, in which an infant is rocked gently in order for it to go to sleep comfortably and peacefully. In the same way, the Earth is the cradle for human beings, suited to them in its rotational and revolutionary motions. And just as the movement of the cradle is intended for the growth of the infant and its repose, so are the Earth's daily and yearly motions intended for nurturing mankind, or, rather, all animals, plants, and minerals.

The verse alludes to the Earth's motion in an implicit, rather than an explicit, way because it was revealed at a time when the consensus of human opinion was that it was motionless, to the degree that this was regarded as an imperative that was not open to doubt.[27]

Among other unknown things that the Qur'an disclosed fourteen centuries ago is the existence of another continent. In this respect, God, the Exalted and Glorified, says:

[God,] Lord of the two easts, and Lord of the two wests (Qur'an 55: 17).

This noble verse perplexed Qur'anic exegetes for many centuries. They suggested numerous interpretations for it. Some said that the verse refers to the rising and set- ting places of the Sun and the Moon. Others ascribed them to the change in the rising and setting angles of the Sun and Moon across the seasons. What should be obvious, however, is that the verse alludes to the existence of another continent on the other side of the Earth, where the rising of the Sun corresponds to its setting on our side. This may be construed from the following verse:

Ah, would that between me and you there were the distance of the two easts [i.e., two horizons]- an evil comrade (Qur'an 43:48).

What is to be understood from this verse is that the span between the two easts is the longest perceptible distance. Accordingly, it is incorrect to understand it as the rising place of the Sun and the Moon or as the angle of their apparent passage across the seasons, because the distance between those is not the longest perceptible distance. Thus, it must refer to the distance between the East and the West. In other words, the setting of the Sun on one part of the globe coincides with its rise over another part. The verse therefore points to the existence of that other part of the globe that was not discovered until several hundred years after the revelation of the Qur'an.

Accordingly, the verses that mention the East and the West in the singular refer to the direction, as in God's saying:

To God belong the East and the West, and whithersoever you turn, there is God's Countenance (Qur'an 2: 115);

whereas the verses that use these words in the dual form are intended as an allusion to the existence of a continent on the other side of the Earth. The verses that use the words in the plural form refer to the East and the West in accordance with the surfaces of the globe, as shall be explained later.

Another unknown thing to which the Qur'an alludes is the roundness of the Earth.

God says:

And we caused the folk who were despised to inherit the eastern parts of the land and the western parts thereof (Qur'an 7: 137). Lord of the heavens and of the Earth and all that is between them, and Lord of the sun's risings (Qur'an 37:5). But nay! I swear by the Lord of the east [the rising-places] and the west [the setting-places] that We are able to substitute a better than they; we shall not be outstripped. (Qur'an 70:40).

These verses indicate that the Sun rises and sets over the Earth at more than one point, therefore implying that the Earth is round. Accordingly, the rising of the Sun over any part of the globe coincides with its setting over the other. Hence, the existence of numerous east and west is evident. It is neither an affected expression nor an arbitrary statement. Al-Qurtubi and others have attributed the east and the west to the changes in the Sun's angle to the Earth as it rises and sets on different days of the year. But this is an oversubtle explanation that is not borne out, for the Sun does not have fixed points of rising so that God may swear by them; rather, they vary according to the regions of the Earth. It is therefore imperative that the reference be to the successive risings and settings that result from the spherical shape of the Earth.

The narratives reported from the guided Imams of the Prophet's family, as well as their supplications and speeches, contain passages which point to the spherical shape of the Earth. Among these is the following statement reported from the Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him):

A man accompanied me who used to perform the evening prayer after dark and the dawn prayer before dawn, whereas I used to perform the evening prayer when the Sun had set and the dawn prayer when the dawn became evident to me. The man asked me: "What prevents you from doing what I do? The Sun rises over some people before it does over us, and sets for us as it rises over other people." I replied: "Because it is our duty to pray when the Sun sets for us and when the dawn breaks for us, and it is their obligation to pray when the Sun sets for them."[28]

The man based his view on his knowledge of the various risings and settings of the Sun, which result from the spherical shape of the Earth. The Imam, for his part, confirms him in that, but also reminds him of his religious obligation.

Similarly, in another tradition, the Imam al-Sadiq says, "However, it is your duty [to determine] your east and your west."

In his morning and evening supplications, the Imam Zayn al-'Abdin (peace be upon him) has said:

And for each one of them [night and day], He has fixed a definite extent and span of time, and has caused each of them to pass into its companion, and has caused its companion to pass into it,[29] to a certain measure for the sake of the worshipers.[30]

The Imam (God's blessings be upon him) intends, with this elucidation, to define something not yet discerned by the minds of that age, namely, the roundness of the Earth (since this notion was beyond human comprehension, because it was not yet discovered by the intellect). He, who was an Imam, knowledgeable with the methods of elucidation, used this subtle method of referring to this matter. Had he, in contrast, been bent on describing what ordinary people could see-namely, the lengthening and shortening of day and night, with each of them alternately taking hours from the other-he would have limited himself to the first phrase, "and has caused each of them to pass into its companion." He would have had no need for the second phrase, "and has caused its companion to pass into it." Therefore, the second phrase must have been added to indicate that the passing of the one into the other is conditioned on the opposite taking place concurrently. This is how the sentence should be understood, for the second phrase, as can be seen from the phrasing of the sentence, is grammatically in the circumstantial form (haal). It is this which indicates that the sentence points to the spherical shape of the earth as well as to the fact that the passing of the night into the day, as observed by us, for instance, necessitates the passing of the day into the night for other people [in another region of the Earth]. Had it not been the Imam's mission to allude to this significant point, there would have been no need for the second phrase; it would have merely been a repetition of the first. In discussing the inimitability of the Qur'an, we have confined ourselves to these few aspects. They are sufficient evidence that the Qur'an is a divine revelation, beyond human accomplishment.

Further proof that the Qur'an is a divine revelation is given by the fact that it was the only schooling for the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali b. Abi Talib (peace be upon him), whose eloquence is such that skilled scholars boast of being able to under- stand his discourses, and profound researchers imbibe from the ocean of his knowledge. Consider his orations in Nahj al-Balagha. Whenever he addresses an issue, he leaves nothing for others to add to it, so much so that those who are not acquainted with his biography would imagine that he had spent his life investigating that subject and researching it. There is no doubt that his erudition and knowledge are linked with revelation and originate from its illumination, for anyone who knows the history of the Arabian peninsula, and especially the Hijaz, would never entertain the idea that this knowledge could have been received from any source other than divine revelation. Indeed, it has been said, in praise of Nahj al-Balagha,that "it is below the Speech of the Creator, but above the speech of human beings."

Rather, I would reiterate, and say that 'Ali's testimony to the inimitability of the Qur'an, coming from a person like him, who was a master of eloquence, and proficient in the esoteric sciences and other branches of knowledge, is in itself proof that the Qur'an is a divine revelation. Certainly, his testimony in this matter could not have stemmed from ignorance and

deception. How can that be possible when he was the master of eloquence and lucidity [in speech], and the man to whom all Islamic sciences go back, he being the excellent epitome of learning? Surely, his opponents as well as his supporters have acknowledged his exceptional faculties. Furthermore, it is not possible to believe that his testimony was a false one, driven by the worldly motives of political or material advantages. How can that be when he was the beacon of asceticism and godliness? He turned away from the world and its adornments, and he rejected the leadership of the Muslims because it was offered to him on the condition that he would follow the example of the two Shaykhs [Abu Bakr and 'Umar, the first and second Rightly Guided caliphs]. He was the one who would not placate Mu'awiya by allowing him to remain temporarily in his sinecure, though he was fully aware of the consequences of deposing him. Consequently, and necessarily, his testimony of belief in the inimitability of the Qur'an must have been genuine, in conformity with his real feelings, and arising from his true faith. And this is reasonable, veritable, and desirable.

Notes

1. 'Izz al-Din ibn al-Athir, Al-Kamil Fi al Ta'rikh, ed. C. J. Tornberg, 13 vols. (Reprint ed., Beirut: Dar Sadir and Dar Beirut, 1965-67) vol. 2, p. 362.

2. For this narrative, see Qur’an 7:107-118 and 26:32--49.- Trans.

3. Al-Hasan ibn Rashiq al-Qayrawani, Al- 'Umda fi Mahasin al-Shi 'r wa Adabihi, ed. Muhammad Qarqazan, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, 1988) vol. 1, p. 206.

4. Louis Cheikho, Shuara 'al-Nasraniyya Qabl al-Islam, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Beirut: Catholic Press, n.d.) vol. 2, p. 640.

5. Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 1, pp. 388-89.

6. For this narrative, see Qur’an 17:88, 52:34; 11:13; and 2:23; 10:37.-Trans.

7. For a definition of tawatur, see note to the author's preface to the first edition.-Trans.

8. There is no doubt that the Qur'an was revealed as a guide to all humanity, although God, in His perfect wisdom, revealed it in the language of a particular community, namely, Arabic. Hence, anyone who regards the Qur'an as the guide should understand its message in his own language. However, in rendering the message of the Qur'an in another language, it is necessary that its meanings be accurately conveyed in translation. Three important matters should be kept in mind in order to translate the Qur'an into another language:

The ostensible sense of the language as it is understood by the learned tradition of the Arabic usage;

The judgment of naturally guided reason;

The interpretation of those who were endowed with inerrancy, such as the Prophet and the Imams.

Moreover, the translator should avoid personal opinions attributed to some commentators, because such exegesis will necessarily render the translation as based on personal opinion. If the above prerequisites are adhered to in the translation, then the translations should be made available in the language of the peoples who will benefit from its guidance.

9. The reference here is to a genre of poetry, or argumentation, known as fakhr (boasting), in which a person boasts of his ancestry, his tribe, and his own achievements and belittles those of his opponents. This genre survived, especially in poetry, long after the establishment of Islam.-Trans.

10. Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabar , Ta'rikh al-Rusul wal-Muluk , ed. M. J. de Goeje, 15 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1882-1902) vol. 3, p. 1300.

11. Biblical quotations in this translation are from The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha, rev. and enl. std. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).-Trans

12. Compare this with the Qur'anic narrative of the event surrounding the crucifixion in 4:154-59, which actually criticizes Jews for violating their compact and rejects their claim to have killed the Messiah themselves.—Trans

13. Many of these absurdities are cited and discussed in Balaghi, Huda; Balaghi, Al-Rihla al-Madrasiyya (Karbala: Mu'assat al-A'lami lil-Matbu'at al-Hadithat, n.d.); and Abu al-Qasim al-MusawI al-Khu'i, Nafahat al-Ijaz (Najaf: al-Matba'at al-'Alawiyya, 1923).

14. Al-rajaz is a common meter employed in Arabic poetry, though it is considered inferior to other classical meters.-Trans.

15. Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Janr al-Tabari, Tafsir al-Tabari: Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil al-Qur'an, ed. Mahmud b. Muhammad Shakir, 29 vols. (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, n.d.) vol. 1, pp.

16. Qurtubi, Tafsir, vol. 19, p. 74.

17. For more details, see Balaghi, Huda, vol. 2, pp. 17-18, 30-34; Balaghi, Al-Rihla al-Madrasiyya; pp. 1-200; Khu'i, Nafahat.

18. The reference here is to the Arabs of Arabia before Islam.-Trans.

19. Games of chance were played with arrows without heads and feathers, for stakes of slaughtered and quartered camel s.-Trans.

20. Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi, Bulugh al-Arab fi Ma 'rifat Ahwal al- 'Arab, ed. Muhammad Bahjat al-Athari, 3 vols. (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, n.d.) vol. 2, p. 52; vol. 3, pp. 43, 54.

21. The Quraysh was the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad, and the dominant tribe in Mekka at the beginning of Muhammad's prophetic mission.-Trans.

22. Muhammad b. Ya'qub Kulayni, Al·Furu' min al-Kafi, vols. 3-7 of Kulayni Al-Usul min al-Kafi, ed. 'Ali Akbar al-Ghaffari, 8 vols. (Tehran: Maktabat al-aduq, 1957-1961) vol. 5, pp. 340--41.

23. Al-Jami' al Sahih bi-Sharh al-Minawi (Beirut: al-Ma'arif, 1981), vol. 4 p. 432.

24. One example of this was the marriage of the daughter of Ziyad b. Labid-who was one of the noblest members of the tribe of Banu Biyada-to Juwaybir, a Muslim, who was short, ugly, needy, and destitute, and a repulsive black person. See Kulayni, Al-Furu: vols. 3-7 of Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 5, pp. 340--43.

25. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, Lubab al-Nuqul fi Asbab al-Nuzul (Tunis: Al-Dar al-Tunisiyya lil-Nashr, 1981) p. 163.

26. "Romans" (Ar.: al-Rum) is the name which medieval Arabs gave to the peoples and lands of the Byzantine Empire. It derives from the fact that Byzantium was still officially the East Roman Empire.- Trans.

27. The astronomer Galileo dared, a millennium after the Hijra, to prove the rotational and revolutionary movements of the earth. His contemporaries abused him and persecuted him until he came close to death. And in spite of his venerable position and his rights as a scientist, he was incarcerated for a long time. As a consequence, European scholars kept secret those discoveries of theirs which were against the age-old myths of their day, because of fear of the Roman church. See Hibat al-Din Muhammad al-Shahrastani, Al-Hay 'a wa al-Islam, 3rd ed. (Najaf: Matba'at al-Adab, 1965) p. 90 n

28. Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 131.

29. A paraphrase of a recurrent passage in the Qur'an, e.g., Qur'an 22:61, "That is because God makes the night to pass into the day and makes the day to pass into the night."-Trans.

30. 'Ali b. al-Husayn Zayn al-'Abidin, Al-Sahifa al-Sajjiidiyya al- Kamila , ed. 'Ali Ansaryan (Damascus: Al-Mustashariyya al-Thaqafiyya lil-Jumhuriyya al-Islamiyya al-iraniyya, n.d.) p. 39.

2. Erroneous Impressions concerning the Miraculous Inimitability of the Qur’an

Synopsis: The Qur'an and Arabic grammar; the manner by which a miracle is established for all humanity; al-Naam's doctrine of morphology; contrariety in the Qur'anic narratives from the two Testaments; the inconsistencies of the Gospel; negation of free will and delegation of authority [to humankind]; the establishment of the middle position between the two extremes in the Qur'an; the compilation of the Qur'an at the time of the Prophet; the method of the Qur'an in connecting separate subjects [in different parts of the Qur'an]; an absurd and futile attempt to counter two Surahs of the Qur'an.

The Qur'an has challenged all humanity to produce a chapter like one of its chapters, and, so far, no one has been able to take up the challenge. Since for its obstinate enemies it was intolerable that the Qur'an should defeat its adversaries, they attempted to lower its prestige by casting doubts that their imaginations fabricated about the greatness of the Qur'an, and [expressing] support of their corrupt beliefs. It would be appropriate to turn here to those unfounded doubts, for which they exerted themselves, and to demonstrate the extent of their knowledge and the way their whims swayed them willy-nilly and cast them into a deep abyss. They maintained the following.

1. There are matters in the Qur'an that are inconsistent with eloquence because they are not in compliance with Arabic grammar. A book like that cannot be a miracle.

This opinion is false on two grounds. First, the Qur'an was revealed among the skilled masters of the Arabic language. It challenged them to counter it, even by producing a single sura, and reminded them that created beings did not have the ability to do so "though they were helpers one of another" (Qur’an 17:88). Had the Qur'an contained passages that did not conform with the rules of Arabic, those skilled masters of the language, who knew its modes and characteristics, would have used these passages as an argument against the Qur'an, and would have criticized it for them. Indeed, they would have been spared the trouble of countering it with words and lances. Moreover, had such a thing happened, history would have recorded it, and the story would have been narrated frequently among the enemies of Islam. How, then, could this be true when not a single narrative has been transmitted concerning it?

Second, the Qur'an was revealed at a time when the rules of Arabic grammar had not taken a definitive form. These rules were derived only afterward, by investigating the usage and structure employed by the masters of Arabic style. If the Qur'an were not a divine revelation [and] its opponents assert [that it is not], there is still no question that it would [represent] an eloquent Arabic speech, and therefore one of the sources of Arabic grammar. It would not be of a lower standard than the eloquent speech of other skilled masters of the language who were contemporaries of the Prophet of Islam. In other words, if subsequent trends in Arabic grammar were in- consistent with the language of the Qur'an, this would be an invalidation of those trends, not an argument against the Qur'an. This is not to mention that this argument against the Qur'an could stand only if the

various readings of the Qur'an were identical. But we shall demonstrate in due course that the prevalent readings are based on the personal reasoning of the readers themselves, and not on an uninterrupted and universally accepted transmission from the Prophet. Thus, if an objection were raised against a given reading, this would be a proof of the invalidity of that particular reading, and would not affect the greatness of the Qur'an and its prestige.

2. They also say that an eloquent speech cannot be regarded as miraculous even if human beings are unable to match it. This is because its eloquence is appreciated by some people [but not by] others. A miracle, in contrast, must be recognized as a miracle by all human beings, for every individual among them is obligated to believe in the prophethood of the person who has worked this miracle.

The response to this objection is as follows. This doubt [about the Qur'an] is as weak and as analogically inconsistent as the preceding one, for it is not an essential requirement that a miracle should be acknowledged by all humanity, and if we were to stipulate that as a requirement, we would be left with no miracles at all. This is because a miracle is recognized by a particular group, and it would be proven to others by an uninterrupted transmission (mutawatir). [1] We have already mentioned that the Qur'an is distinguished from other miracles in that the transmission of a reported [tradition] may be interrupted with the passage of time. As for the Qur'an, it is a miracle which will last forever, along with the lasting of the Arab nation or even of those who know the characteristics of the Arabic language, even though they may not be Arabs.

3. They say that whoever has a full understanding of Arabic would be able to bring forth a word like the words of the Qur'an; and since [such a person] can do that, he will also be able to produce the like of the Qur'an. This is because the rules regarding the possible and the impossible similarities are one and the same.

The response is as follows. This doubt does not deserve mentioning, for the ability to bring forth the like of a word of the Qur'an, or even of one of its sentences, does not entail the ability to bring forth the like of the [entire] Qur'an, or even of one of its suras. This is because the ability to produce one element of a structure does not entail the ability to produce the whole. For this reason, it is not correct to say that every person on earth has the ability to create magnificent castles and huge palaces simply because he is able to make a brick in the structure. Nor is it correct to say that every Arab is able to write speeches and compose panegyrics because he knows all the words and vocabularies that [are used] in them.

It was probably this mistaken view that led al-Nazzam and his associates to argue that the inimitability of the Qur'an was in its being 'kept away' [from other human beings]. This view is very difficult to sustain because of the following points.

First, if by 'keeping away' they mean that God is able to empower a human being to bring forth the like of the Qur'an, but that God has kept this ability away from [the rest of] mankind, this would be correct, but it would apply to all miracles, not only to the Qur'an. However, if it means that

people possess the ability to bring forth the like of the Qur'an, but God has kept them away from countering it, then this would be wrong because many people have attempted to match the Qur'an, but failed, and have admitted their failure.

Second, if the inimitability of the Qur'an rested in 'keeping away,' then something like it would have existed in pre-Islamic Arabic literature before the Prophet had challenged mankind to do that. Had such a thing existed, it would have been reported by an uninterrupted transmission, for there were many good reasons for it to be reported. However, since it neither existed nor was narrated, this proves that the Qur'an is by itself a divine miracle, beyond human capacity [for achievement].

4.They also say that even if the miraculous inimitability of the Qur'an is conceded, this does not establish the truthfulness of the prophecy of the person who brought it forth, for the Qur'anic stories contradict the stories of the two Testaments, whose divine origin has been proven by uninterrupted transmission.

The response to this is that the Qur'an, by contradicting the mythical stories of the two Testaments, has put an end to all doubts about its being a divine revelation, for it contains no myths or absurdities or anything that is not rationally attributable to God, the Exalted, and to His prophets. Consequently, the Qur'an's contradiction of the two Testaments is itself a proof of its being a divine revelation. We have already alluded to this, and to a number of fallacies in the two Testaments.

5. They say that the Qur'an contains inconsistencies and that, as such, it cannot be regarded as a divine revelation. They claim that the inconsistencies occur in two places: first in God's saying [to Zechariah]: "Your [divine] sign is that you will not speak to the people for three days except through intimation" (Qur’an 3:41). This, they maintain, contradicts God's saying that "your sign is that you will not speak to the people for three nights together" (Qur’an 19:10).

The response to this is that the word "day" (yawm) may apply to daylight only, as in the following:

And He subjected them to it on seven nights and eight grueling days (Qur’an 69:7).

Or [it may apply] to daylight and the following night, as in God's saying:

Enjoy life in your homes for three days (Qur’an 11:65)!

Likewise, the word "night" (layl) may apply to the period between sunset and sunrise, as in God's saying:

By the night when it conceals (Qur’an 92: 1).

Seven nights and eight grueling days (Qur’an 69:7).

Or it may apply to nighttime and the following daylight, as in God's saying: "And We promised Moses forty nights" (Qur’an 2:51).

The use of the words "night" and "day" in these two senses is frequent. Indeed, the two words have been used in those two noble verses [Qur’an 69:7 and 2:51] in the second sense of daylight and nighttime combined. As such, there is no inconsistency. The suspicion of inconsistency is based on the words "day" and "night" as they are used in the first sense. What we have explained is clear, without any ambiguity in it. However, the person

who raises this suspicion deliberately overlooks the truth in order to detract from the prestige of the Qur'an. Moreover, he is oblivious to, or perhaps deliberately overlooks, the obvious contradiction in the New Testament when it uses these two words. For, chapter 12 of Matthew reports that Christ said that he shall remain buried in the earth for three days or three nights. Yet both Matthew and the other three gospels are in agreement that Christ did not remain buried except from just before sunset on Friday, through the night of Friday, the daylight of Saturday, and the night of Saturday, till before the dawn of Sunday. Look at the variations in the gospels, and then say to the author of the Gospel of Matthew and to all those who believe that is a divine revelation: How do the three days and three nights add up? And, it is indeed strange that Western scholars and intellectuals believe in the two Testaments, which are so replete with myths and contradictions, and not in the Qur'an, which is the Book committed to the guidance of humanity, and to leading them toward their happiness in this and the next world. However, prejudice is an incurable disease, and the seekers of truth are few, as we have pointed out earlier.

The second Qur'anic inconsistency noted is that the Qur'an sometimes attributes an act to the decision of the creature. Thus, it says:

Thus, the one who wishes will believe and the one who wishes will disbelieve (Qur’an 18:29).

There are many other verses that say this, and they establish that the human being is free in his actions. However, the Qur'an at times also attributes the decision regarding actions to God, the Exalted. Thus, it says:

You do not will, except what God wills (Qur’an 76:30).

Accordingly, they [these critics] assert that this last verse indicates that human beings are coerced in their actions. Thus, they maintain that this is an evident contradiction, and that the interpretation of the verses is against their general sense, an opinion without proof.

The response is that each human being is able to perceive, through his innate disposition, that he is capable of a number of actions. Thus, it is possible for him to perform or not perform them. This is an instinctive judgment that no one can doubt except if the doubt is introduced from without. All rational persons are unanimous in censuring evildoers and praising the good. This is one proof that human beings are free in their actions, and not compelled when they perform them. Every rational person can observe that his movement when he walks on the ground is different from that when he falls from a high place to the ground. Thus, he will observe that he is free in the former case and coerced in the latter. Moreover, every rational person is able to perceive, through his innate disposition, that, although he is free to do or not to do certain things, most of the rudiments of these actions are, in many cases, outside his choice. This is because among the rudiments of performing an act is the existence of the human being, his perception of the act, his desire for it, the appropriateness of the act for one of his capacities, and his ability to perform it. It is clear that these kinds of rudiments are beyond human free will, and the one who creates these things in human beings is the Creator of the human being himself.

It has been established in its proper place that the Creator of these elements in mankind did not detach Himself from His creatures after the creation, and that the survival of created things and their continuity need its mover at every moment. The relationship of the Creator to the things He creates is not the same as the relation between the mason and a wall he has built. The wall thereafter does not need its builder. It will remain even if he dies. Nor does it resemble an author whom the book needs until it has been written, but does not need in the stages of its survival and continuation. Rather, the relationship of the Creator, "to whom belongs the loftiest likeness" [Qur’an 16:60], to the things created resembles the effect of electrical power on light. Undoubtedly, the light does not turn on except when it is connected with an electric current, and it will remain in need for this supply of power at all times. But if its wire is disconnected from its source of power for any period of time, the light will be extinguished for that period of time, as if it never existed. Thus do all things and all existents draw on their First Creator for their existence, as long as they exist. They are ever in need of His support, bound to His mercy, which "embraces all things" [Qur’an 7: 156]. Accordingly, human actions fall in between free will and predetermination; yet this power and all other elements during the act are conferred by God. Hence, in one respect, the action depends on the human being, and in another, it depends on God. The verses of the Qur'an point to this sense, and a person's freedom to act does not hinder the effect of God's power and authority. We shall give here an example that approximates what we said and would clarify the principle of the "proposition [that is] between the two propositions," which Imams of the Imamite Shi'ites have proclaimed, and to which the Qur'an has alluded.

Let us imagine a person with a paralyzed hand that he cannot move by himself. However, a physician is able to give it temporary willful movement by means of electrical power, so that the person is able to move his hand by himself when the physician connects it to an electrical current. But if he is separated from the source of power, he is unable to move it at all. Thus, if the physician were to connect the current as an experiment, and if the sick man began to move his hand and use it in his actions, and if, further, the physician continued to provide him with power all the time, this would be a clear example of the "proposition between the two propositions" [of complete freedom and complete predetermination]. [In other words], the movements of the hand cannot be attributed to the man independently, because he is dependent on the supply of power provided by the physician. Nor can that be attributed independently to the physician, because the movements have proceeded from the man of his own will.

Accordingly, the doer is not compelled in his actions, for he himself had willed them; nor are the actions fully delegated to him, because the means come from someone else. All actions that are freely chosen by the doer are of this type. The action originates in the will of the creature, and the creature does not will anything, but with God's leave. All the verses of the Qur'an allude to this end. As such, they invalidate predestination, which is maintained by the majority of Sunnis, for they advance the notion of free will. On the other hand, the verses invalidate complete free will, which is

maintained by a few Sunnis, for they attribute the act to God. We shall deal with this subject at length, God willing, when we comment on the relevant verses, and shall refute both these views.

This discussion . . . is derived from the declarations of the Ahl al-Bayt [i.e., from the Imams], and their knowledge. They are those from whom God has removed all pollution, and has purified thoroughly. Here are some of their sayings on this subject.

A man reported the following discussion with the Imam al-Sadiq:

I said, "Has God coerced His servants to commit disobedience?" He said, "No." I said, "Has He delegated to them the matter?" He said, "No." I said, "Then, what is the truth?" He said, "The benevolence of your Lord is between these two [extremes]."[2]

In another tradition from the Imam al-Sadiq, he is reported as saying, "There is neither predetermination nor free will; rather, it is a position between the two."[3]

The Shi'ite compendiums of traditions contain numerous traditions to this effect.

[Returning to the arguments against the inimitability of the Qur'an]:

They say that if producing an inimitable book is a miracle, then the Elements of Euclid and the Almajeste [of Ptolemy] are miracles. This hypothesis is invalid, however; therefore, the preceding hypothesis is also invalid.

The answer to this is as follows. First, these two books are not inimitable, and no claim to this effect is valid for them. How could they be inimitable when later scholars have produced even better works in these two sciences, and without any difficulty? Furthermore, the later works are superior for other reasons, such as containing new material not broached by the earlier two. Second, we have already mentioned certain prerequisites for miracles. One of these is that they are performed as a challenge to demonstrate the truthfulness [of the claim] to the divine office [of prophethood]. Another prerequisite is that a miracle should be beyond the laws of nature. Both these prerequisites are absent in the case of the two books [cited above]. We explained this completely in the beginning of our discussion about miraculous inimitability.

They also say that the Arabs did not counter the Qur'an, not because it was a miracle and thus beyond human capacity to imitate but because of other reasons that have nothing to do with inimitability. Those who were contemporary with the Prophet's mission, and those who came a little later, were prevented from challenging the Qur'an by the hegemony of the Muslims. They refrained from countering the Qur'an for fear for their lives and goods from those who were in power. When the power of the first four caliphs came to an end and authority passed on to the Umayyads, who did not base their caliphate on the Islamic call, the Qur'an had become comfortingly familiar to all minds because of the elegance of its words and the strength of its meanings. It had become a treasure, inherited from generation to generation; thus, they refrained from countering it.

The response to this is as follows.

First, the challenge with the Qur'an, and the demand to counter it by matching one of its chapters, were made by the Prophet in Mecca, before the power of Islam had prevailed and the Muslims had consolidated their authority. In spite of that, none of the masters of Arabic style were able to meet this challenge.

Second, fear of Muslim power during the reign of the first caliphs did not prevent the rejecters of faith from manifesting their rejection of the religion of Islam. Indeed, the people of the Book lived among Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula, and other places, in perfect happiness and good fortune. They had the same rights as the Muslims and the same obligations. This was so especially during the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful ['Ali b. Abi Talib], whose commitment to justice and copious knowledge were acknowledged by Muslims and non-Muslims. Had any of these people of the Book [i.e., the Jews and the Christians] been able to produce the like of the Qur'an, they would have certainly brought it forth in their argument [against the Muslims].

Third, fear, if it did exist, would have merely prevented an open attempt at countering the Qur'an. But what was it that stopped the people of the Book or others from trying to counter it in the secrecy of their homes and gatherings? And if such an attempt had succeeded, would not the people of the Book have preserved it until the fear had passed and they could disclose it, as they did with the myths of the two Testaments and all other things related to their religions?

Fourth, due to well-observed human characteristics, even works of high stylistic merit will lose their effectiveness with repetition. It is for this reason that a beautiful ode, frequently heard, becomes boring and irritating to the listener. If he were to hear another ode, he might at first think it more eloquent than the first. But if the second ode is also frequently repeated, the relative merits of the two will become apparent. This applies to all things that human beings delight in and enjoy-whatever they eat, wear, hear, and so on. If the Qur'an had not been a miracle, then it, too, would have been subject to the same rule, and would have lost its effectiveness on the souls of its hearers due to repetition and the passage of time. Thus, countering it would have become easier. Yet we find that the more the Qur'an is recited and repeated, the more it gains in beauty and resplendence, the more it gives of its gnosis and certainty, and the more faith and belief it inspires. In this distinctive characteristic, the Qur'an is the opposite of customary literature. Consequently, this aspect, contrary to what the opponent suspects, confirms its miraculous inimitability.

Fifth, even if we were to concede that repeated recitations of the Qur'an lead to pleasing familiarity, and therefore forestall attempts to match it, this would apply only to Muslims who believe in it and listen to it with desire and yearning whenever it is recited. Then, why should non-Muslim Arabs who are skilled in the language refrain from countering it? They could have been sure that, if successful, the ability to match it would have been convincing, even if only to non-Muslims.

They also say that history mentions that when Abu Bakr decided to compile the Qur'an, he asked 'Umar [b. al-Khattab] and Zayd b. Thabit to sit

at the entrance of the mosque and write down whatever was attested by two witnesses to be part of the Book of God. This proves that the Qur'an does not exceed the laws of nature, for, had this been the case, it would not have required the testimony of others, but would have borne witness for itself.

The response to this is as follows.

First, the Qur'an is a miracle in its eloquence and its style, not in each of its words taken separately. Therefore, doubt may arise that a word here and there might have been altered, added, or omitted. The testimony of the witnesses, if they provide accurate information, is to remove the errors arising from the inadvertent or intentional mistakes of the reciters. On the other hand, the inability of a human being to produce a Sura like that of the Qur'an does not negate his ability to produce a verse or what resembles a verse. This is quite possible, and Muslims have never claimed that it is impossible, nor did the Qur'an mention it when it challenged humanity to match it.

Second, all the traditions that speak about the compilation of the Qur'an during the caliphate of Abu Bakr, on the basis of the testimony of two witnesses among the Prophet's Companions, are traditions with a single chain of transmission, and there- fore do not qualify as proof in such matters.

Third, these traditions have, moreover, been contradicted by numerous traditions that state that the Qur'an was compiled [at a time] during the Prophet's life when many of his Companions knew the entire Qur'an by heart. As for those who had memorized only some of its suras or parts, only God knows their number. This is not to mention that a simple rational analysis would reveal the falsehood of the reports used as evidence by the opponent. Undoubtedly, the Qur'an was the principal means of guiding the believers and bringing them from the darkness of misfortune and ignorance to the light of happiness and knowledge. Indeed, the Muslims went to the greatest length in heeding and guarding the Qur'an. They recited its verses day and night, took pride in memorizing and mastering it, and sought blessings from its suras and verses; and the Prophet used to encourage them to do that. Is it then possible, after all this, that they should entertain doubts about it to the extent of requiring double attestations to establish its text? We shall establish, God willing, in subsequent chapters of this book, that the Qur'an was compiled during the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny).

9. They also say that the Qur'an has a style which is at variance with the styles of the masters of the Arabic language. It mixes together several subjects. While it is speaking about history, it shifts to the topic of "the promise [of reward] and the threat [of punishment]," then to axioms and proverbs, and then on to something else. If the Qur'an were to be classified by subject, [thereby] bringing under each subject the verses related to it, its benefit would have been greater, and perusing it would have been easier.

The response to this is as follows. The Qur'an was revealed for the guidance of man- kind and to lead them toward their happiness in this world and the next. It is not a book of history or jurisprudence, or ethics, or anything else that requires that it devote a separate section to each of these

subjects. There is indeed no doubt that the Qur'an is the best-suited mode to achieve the desired goal. This is because the reader of some suras of the Qur'an would be able to cover many of its purposes and objectives in the shortest time possible and with the least trouble. He can thus turn his attention to the creation and the final return for judgment, and be informed about the bygone nations and take warning from them. Moreover, he can benefit from the excellent virtues and the lofty branches of knowledge, and learn aspects of injunctions concerning the forms of worship and the rules of transactions. All this is achieved while preserving the sequence of the discourse, and doing justice to its clarity, and observing the requirements of the situation. These benefits could not be derived from the Qur'an if it had been divided into topical sections and chapters, because the reader would not have been able to encompass the goals of the Qur'an except by reading it in its entirety. And if an obstacle were to prevent him from completing it, he would not benefit except from a sura or two.

Indeed, this is one of the excellent [aspects] of the Qur'anic style, a style which gives it beauty and value. For, although it shifts from subject to subject, it has preserved a perfect cohesion between them, as if each sentence is a pearl in a matched necklace. But hatred of Islam has blinded and deafened this critic to the extent that he imagines the Qur'an's beauty to be ugliness, and its virtue to be a vice.

Moreover, the Qur'an repeats some of its stories in different wordings, according to the appropriate occasions for the repetition. If these stories, with their different wordings, were to be gathered in one section, that would weaken this obvious benefit and this repetition would be without tangible benefit for the reader.

Myths and Absurdities

The author of the pamphlet Husn al-ijaz [The Beauty of Conciseness], mentions that it is possible to counter the Qur'an with its like.[4] He lists a number of sentences from the Qur'an and alters some of their wordings, and asserts that he has countered the Qur'an with them. In doing this, he merely demonstrated the limits of his knowledge and his poor expertise in the art of eloquence. Here, we shall mention these sentences to the reader, and explain to him the errors of this illusory matching. We have dealt with these at length in our book Nafahat al-I'jaz [The Fragrance of Miracle].

In countering the Opening (al-Fatiha) Sura, this deluded person tries to match it by saying:

Praise be to the Merciful, Lord of existences (akwan), the Judging King. For You alone is the worship, and from You alone is the help. Show us the path of the faith.

Having written this, he deluded himself [into thinking] that it meets fully all the significations of the Opening Sura, though he actually encompasses far less.

I am at a loss as to what to say to the author of these sentences, when he has such a limited ability to distinguish between meager and stout speech. If only he had presented these words to Christian scholars knowledgeable about the style of speech, and the skills of eloquence, before disgracing himself with this claim. Was he not aware that in countering a speech with

its like, the author or poet must produce a speech that would be in harmony with the contested speech in some of its aspects or goals? Instead, he produces a speech independent in words, phrases, and style? A contest does not mean imitating the contested speech in its structure and style, and freely altering and replacing some of its words with others; otherwise, it would be possible to counter any speech in this manner. Such a thing would have been very easy for the Arab contemporaries of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny). However, because they were fully aware of the true meaning of imitation, and because of their knowledge of the eloquence of the Qur'an, they were unable to counter it, and forthwith admitted their inability. Those who wanted to believe in it did so, while those who wanted to strive against it did so:

Then he said, "This is nothing else than magic from of old" (Qur’an 74:24).

Aside from that, how can a comparison be made between these sentences-for which [their author] has exerted himself so much-and the Opening (al-Fatiha) of the Qur'an, such that he may delude himself [into thinking] that his sentences fully cover the Qur'anic verses? Was it not enough for that writer to be ignorant of the art of style; did he have to go further and display this to the public? How can we com- pare what he says, "Praise be to al-Rahman (the Merciful)," with what God says, "Praise be to Allah (God)" (Qur’an 1:2), when his sentence fails to grasp the intended meaning of God's words? Clearly, the word "Allah" is a proper name for the Sacred Being that embraces all His perfect attributes. Divine mercy, which is mentioned in the basmala [the declaration: In the name of God, the Merciful (al-Rahman), the Compassionate (al-Rahim)], is only one of God's perfect attributes. Hence, using it instead of "God" fails to point to the other perfect attributes of the Sacred Being, which are as much a cause of praising Him as His mercy.

Similarly, substituting "the Lord of the existences" (al-akwan) for what God says, "The Lord of the Worlds (al-amin), the Merciful (al-Rahman), the Compassionate (al-Rahim), again fails to express the meaning of these two verses. This is be- cause the two Qur'anic verses refer to the numerous small and large worlds, and affirm that God is Master and Lord of all of them, and that His mercy encompasses all these worlds continuously, without disruption, as the words "the Compassionate," following the words "the Merciful," demonstrate. We shall expound on this in our commentary on the opening verse of the Qur'an.

None of these meanings can be found in the words "the Lord of the existences" (al-akwan). The word al-Akwan means "occurrence," "creation," "development," and "sustenance." In all these synonyms, it conveys the sense of the infinitive, to which it is incorrect to add the word al-Rabb, as the latter means the Lord, the Nurturer. However, it is proper to add to it the word al-Khaliq ("the Creator"). Thus, one can say, "The Creator of the existences." However, the plural form "existences" neither points to the numerous existing worlds to which the word al- alamin alludes, nor to the other aspects that the noble verse suggests.

Likewise, substituting "the Judging King" for God's saying, "Master of the Day of Judgment," does not convey the sense that there exists another world-the world to come-where deeds are recompensed, nor [the sense] that God, the Exalted, is the Master of that day, on which no one else shall act or decide. Nor does it convey the meaning implied by God's words-namely, that on that Day all people shall be subject to His judgment, and that His command concerning their affairs shall come to pass. Thus, some will go to paradise while others will be damned to the Fire. In contrast, the most that the sentence by the writer [cited above] conveys is that God is a King who recompenses for deeds done. But where is this signification in the noble verse?

As for God's saying: "You (alone) we worship, and You (alone) we ask for help," all that that writer has understood is that worship is necessarily only for God, and that help is to be sought only from Him. Hence, he substituted the following sentence for this verse: "For You alone is the worship, and from You alone is the help." What escaped him is the purpose of the verse-namely, instructing the believer that his act of worship should express his faith in the Oneness of God; and that he is in need of the help of God, the Almighty and Glorious, in his forms of worship and his other activities; and that he should acknowledge that he and all other believers do not worship [anyone] except God, and do not turn for help except to God; rather, they worship Him alone and turn for help to Him alone. And where is any of this conveyed in the writer's sentence, which clearly falls short of the meaning implied in the noble verse?

God's saying "Show us the straight path" indicates that the worshiper seeks guidance to the shortest path to his goals-namely, his affairs, his natural disposition, and his beliefs. As such, it does not limit him [in this seeking] only to the path of the faith. This [comprehensive meaning of the verse] is not adequately covered by what the writer substitutes: "Show us the path of the faith." This is not to mention that this sentence seeks guidance to the path of the faith, with nothing in it to indicate that this path is straight and will not lead its seeker astray.

With this sentence, the author of these alterations feels no need to go on and deal with the rest of this blessed sura of the Qur'an. He claims that his sentence does not need the rest. In this, he only betrays his inability to understand the meaning of the rest of the Qur'anic sura. God's saying "The path of those whom You have favored; not of those who earn Your anger, nor of those who go astray" reveals the existence of a straight path treaded by those favored by God: the prophets, the veracious, the witnesses to His existence, and the righteous; as well as the existence of other paths that are not straight, and that were treaded by those who had earned God's anger: the obstinate opponents of the truth, those who rejected it after it had become manifest, and those who went astray, losing the path of guidance through their ignorance, and by failing to make the effort necessary to find it-those, in short, who were content with the ways of their forebears and were willing to follow them in blind imitation, without guidance from God or rational thought [cf. Qur'an 7:28, 10:78, 31:21, 43:22-23]. Whoever reflects on these verses will remember this and will become aware of the necessity of

following the example of the friends of God, who were brought near to Him by all their deeds, virtues, beliefs, and by avoiding the paths of the disobedient, who had earned God's wrath with their deeds: They are the ones who strayed from the path after it had become manifest. Are those to be regarded as unimportant meanings, as the author [cited] has assumed?

In countering "Surat al-Kawthar" (the Abundance), [which reads]:

[Lo! We have given you Abundance; so pray to Your Lord and sacrifice. Lo! It is your insulter [and not you], who is without posterity (Qur'an 108:1-3)],

this same writer has produced the following:

Lo! We have given you jewels; so pray to your Lord and proclaim. And, do not rely upon the words of a magician.

Witness the manner in which he imitates the style and phraseology of the Qur'an. He changes some of its words and deludes people [into thinking] that he has matched it. He, moreover, plagiarizes one of the sayings of Musaylima, the false prophet, who says:

Lo! We have given you multitudes, so pray to your Lord and proclaim. And, lo! The one who hates you is a rejecter of faith.[5]

What is strange is that the writer assumes that the similarity of rhymed prose between the two verses makes them equally eloquent. He does not take into consideration that a gift of jewels does not result in offering the prayer and proclaiming it, and that God has bestowed greater and more noble blessings on His servant than wealth, such as the blessings of life, intellect, and faith. How, then, can wealth, rather than these other great blessings, be the reason for praying to God? Still, for a person who is bribed to carry out missionary activity, wealth does become the direction toward which he offers his prayer, and the goal for which he strives, and the aim he puts ahead of all aims, for "each vessel effuses with whatever it contains."

It is within our right to ask this writer [for] the meaning of the word al-jawahir (jewels), which he uses with the definite article al (the). If he means a particular gem, the rest of his words contain no evidence of what gems he means. And if he means all kinds of known gems-in the sense that when the definite article is appended to the plural of the noun, it indicates totality-then it is an evident falsehood. More- over, in what way are the first two sentences relevant to the last-namely, "And, do not rely upon the words of a magician"? What does he mean by a magician or by a magician's unreliable words? If he has in mind a specific magician and specific words, then he should have provided a clue to that. But there is nothing in his sentence that lends itself to determining this. If, on the other hand, he means everything that magicians say since both words are in the indefinite form and used in a negative context-then he would be talking nonsense, for there is no good reason to doubt the reliability of everything that magicians say, even when this statement, in ordinary circumstances, is accompanied by confidence in what he says. And, if he means that one should not rely upon the word of a magician simply because he is a magician, this would be incorrect, because the magician, as a magician, does not have anything to say by virtue of his being a conjurer. Rather, he mesmerizes people and causes them harm by his tricks and his actions.

As for "Surat al-Kawthar," it was revealed about someone who hated the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), and who said about him that he is without children and that he will die and that his name and his religion will end. It is to this fact that the following words of God, the Exalted, refer:

Or they say: "[He] is a poet, for whom we may expect the accident of time"? (Qur'an 52:30)

Then God, the Blessed and Exalted, revealed ["Surat al-Kawthar"]: "Lo! We have given you Abundance" (Qur'an 108:1).

Al-Kawthar means "abundant good" in every respect. In this world, God gave the Prophet the honor of prophethood, the [role of] guidance of humankind, leadership of the Muslims, numerous Helpers, and victory over the enemy. Moreover, God also gave him numerous offspring through his veracious daughter Fatima (peace be upon her), who will make his name remain as long as the world remains. In the next world, God endowed him with the power of intercession, the lofty gardens, the spring [of al-Kawthar], from which none except his friends shall drink, and all the other blessings which God bestowed on him. "So pray to your Lord and sacrifice" (Qur'an 108:2) in gratitude to Him for all these blessings. The word nahr (sacrifice) could refer to a number of things, such as the sacrifice at Mina; the sacrificial offerings on the occasion of al-Adha;[6] the raising of the hands to the upper part of the chest, while pro- claiming the greatness of God (takbir) during the prayers;[7] the turning toward the direction of prayer (al-qibla) while raising the hands and standing upright in prayer. All these things befit the context because they are an expression of gratitude for those blessings. God, the Glorified, says:

Lo! It is your insulter [and not you] who is without posterity (Qur'an 108:3).

No name or good mention shall remain of the insulter. The outcome for those insulters was exactly what God said about them. No name or good mention remained of them in the world, not to mention the painful doom and everlasting ignominy that was their recompense in the hereafter. Is there any comparison between the lofty meanings and perfect eloquence of this blessed sura, with those inferior sentences which the writer [cited previously] exerted himself to compose? He imitates the Qur'an in its phraseology, and takes from Musaylima the Liar his words and style, and comes up with whatever his obstinacy or, rather, his ignorance dictates; and with this he counters the Qur'an with all its greatness of eloquence and its inimitability!

Notes

1. For a definition of this term, see note 1 to the author's preface to the first edition.—Trans

2. Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 5, p. 31.

3. Ibid., vol. 5, p. 36

4. This was a pamphlet published by the Anglo-American Press at Bulaq, Egypt, in 1912.

5. This is one of the verses that Musaylima produced to support his false claim to the prophethood after the death of the Prophet of Islam. The lines are, likewise, in imitation of "Surat al-Kawthar."—Trans.

6. This is the feast of 10 Dhu al-Hijja, marking the end of the hajj pilgrimage.—Trans.

7. This is the proclamation allahu akbar (Greater is God).—Trans

3. Concerning the Prophet's Other Miracles

Synopsis: Miracles established through logical proof; an examination of the documents used as evidence by those who deny those miracles; the annunciation of the prophethood of Muhammad in the Torah and the Gospel; the conversion of many Jews and Christians to Islam, which is the absolute proof that demonstrates the truthfulness of this annunciation; the Prophet's miracles, even more worthy of belief than the miracles performed by the past prophets.

No well-informed scholar will doubt that the Qur'an is the greatest miracle that the Prophet of Islam produced. This means that it is the greatest miracle worked by all the prophets and messengers. In the preceding discussion, we have mentioned some of these from the standpoint of their miraculous nature, and have clarified the superiority of the Book of God over all these miracles. However, we wish to reiterate here that the miracles of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) were not limited to the Qur'an; rather, he matched them in his ability to work miracles while, at the same time, distinguishing himself from the rest of them with the miracle of the Exalted Book. The evidence of this lies in two points.

First, [there are] the traditions reported among Muslims through uninterrupted transmission, which establish that the Prophet worked other miracles. Muslims of all doctrines and sects have compiled numerous books [on the subject] that any person interested in the subject can refer to. These reports are superior in two respects to those compiled by the people of the Book regarding their own prophets.

The first is the closeness of the period: Any report that is close to the event is easier to believe than later reports. The second is the large number of transmitters. The Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) who witnessed his miracles were far more numerous than the Jews and Christians who reported the miracles of their own prophets. The followers of Jesus (peace be upon him) during his lifetime could be counted on the fingers; therefore, the reports of his miracles must have originated with these few believers. Hence, if the reports concerning the miracles of Moses and Jesus have any claim to universal acceptance through uninterrupted transmission, so do, to a greater extent, the reports concerning the miracles of the Prophet of Islam. But, as we have just explained, the reports on the miracles of the earlier prophets are not confirmed to have been transmitted without interruption in the succeeding periods; hence, the claim is invalid.

Moreover, the Prophet of Islam confirmed many of the miracles of earlier prophets, and then claimed that he was superior to all of them, and that the line of prophets ended with him. This claim necessitates that his miracles should be more extraordinary than those that occurred before him, for it would be unreasonable for anyone to claim superiority over others while confessing that he is inferior to them in some of the attributes of perfection. Does it stand to reason for someone to claim that he is the most learned of all physicians, and, at the same time, concede that some of the other physicians are able to cure a disease that he is unable to cure? Reason rules against this. It is because of this that we see that most of the false prophets

denied that miracles could occur. They repudiated all the miracles of past prophets and endeavored to explain away the verses which mention the occurrence of miracles, lest the people ask them for something similar, and their incapacity would thereby be exposed. Some ignorant persons and those who mislead simple folk have written that the verses of the Qur'an include things which deny any miracle for the great Prophet except the Qur'an. They maintain that the Qur'an is his only miracle to the exclusion of any other, and that it is the only proof of his prophethood. We shall now turn to the verses they have quoted as proof and discuss their arguments; then we shall point out their error.

One of these verses is [what] God says:

Naught hinders Us from sending signs [al-ayat] save that the folk of old denied them. And We gave Thamud the she-camel - a clear portent- but they did wrong in respect to her. We send not divine signs, save to warn (Qur’an 17:59).

The above passage, they assert, shows clearly that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) did not bring any divine sign except the Qur'an. The reason for not sending other signs is that the earliest of bygone communities [to which prophets were sent] denied the divine signs that were sent to them.

The response is as follows.

The signs which the verse repudiates, and which were denied by the earlier communities, were only the divine signs that the communities demanded from their prophets. Therefore, the verse simply indicates that the Prophet did not comply with the unbelievers in producing the divine signs they specified. It does not deny that he did not perform any miracles at all. That the signs intended here are only those which were demanded is indicated by the following.

First, the word ayat is the plural of aya, meaning "a sign." The word in the [Arabic] verse is the definite plural, preceded by the definite article al- (the). There are three possible meanings of the word in its present context. One is the generic meaning that would apply to every sign. This would entail that the verse denies the occurrence of any sign that confirms a prophet's claim. The corollary is that sending a prophet is futile, for there is no benefit in sending him without a clear proof of his veracity. In other words, to impose on people the obligation to acknowledge him creates a situation whereby the people have been asked to perform a duty of which they are not capable. Another possible meaning is that the term refers to all the signs, and this is also erroneous, for the confirmation of a prophet's veracity could be achieved by any divine sign. It does not require all the signs. Besides, those who demanded the signs did not ask him to produce all of them; hence, there is no point in ascribing this meaning to the verse. Evidently, the prohibited signs mentioned in this verse are certain divine miracles that are known.

Second, if the denial expressed by the doubtful were a good reason to prevent the sending of divine signs, it would have, likewise, been a good reason to prevent the sending of the Qur'an as well, for there is no sense in excepting the Qur'an, of all di- vine signs, from this obstruction. We have

already explained that the Qur'an is the most important miracle brought by any prophet, and that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) challenged all the communities with it in order to prove his prophethood as long as there remain days and nights. This also conveys to us that the prohibited signs were only a particular kind of signs, and not divine signs in general.

Third, the verse states that the reason for not sending the divine signs was that such signs were denied to the earlier communities. This amounts to explaining the absence of a thing by the presence of an obstacle. It is evident that a justification based on the existence of an obstacle is not rationally acceptable except if the cause necessitating the existence of that thing is present. An intelligent person, for example, would find it inappropriate to explain that a piece of wood is not damp, when the fact is that there is no fire around it to make it bum. This is self evident, and is not open to doubt. Therefore, to justify the absence of divine signs on the ground of the denials, it would be imperative that something existed that required sending them. The thing which required sending them could have been the divine wisdom of guiding human beings and leading them toward their happiness. In this case, the people's request for signs from the Prophet must have exceeded the number required to provide the proof [of his claim to divine office]. However, if divine wisdom were the thing that required sending signs, then they would have inevitably been sent. This is because nothing can prevent divine wisdom from effecting what it wants, because it is unthinkable that the All-Wise would choose to do something that would contradict His wisdom, regardless of the existence or nonexistence of denial. Besides, if the denials of past communities were admissible as an obstacle preventing divine wisdom from sending the signs, they would have also been admissible as obstacles to sending the Prophet. This and its opposite premises are necessarily false, and a contradiction of what is obligatory. Hence, it remains that the thing requiring the signs to be sent is the demand of the people. Those who demand divine signs inevitably require things that exceed the [number of] signs necessary for establishing the proof. This is to say that it is incumbent on God to send whatever signs are necessary to establish the proof, but any signs in excess of those must not be sent by God, neither of His own accord nor in compliance with the demand of the doubters. It is true, however, that it would not be impossible for Him to do that if circumstances deemed it necessary to establish the proof a second or a third time, or if it were necessary to respond to what the people demanded.

Accordingly, the demand for signs must have been made by some people after the proof had been established for them with the necessary signs, and after they had denied them. Moreover, denials by past communities were the reasons for not sending the signs demanded by those communities, because a further denial of the demanded signs would have made it necessary to send down punishment on those who deny. [But God could not do this], for He had guaranteed, as a favor for His Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), and out of respect for his status, to remove worldly punishment from those communities. Thus, God, the Exalted, says, "But God would not punish them while you were with them" (Qur’an 8:33).

That the denial of the demanded divine signs necessitates the punishment of those who deny it is because of the following: The initial signs are solely for the purpose of proving the prophethood of the prophet, and as such, denying them would not lead to more than the eternal punishment due them for denying the prophet. But signs demanded by the people reflect the disputatiousness and obduracy of those who demand them. This is because if they were after the truth, they would have believed the first sign, for it is sufficient proof. Moreover, their demand signifies that they committed themselves to believing in the prophet if the latter were to respond to the demand. Thus, if they were to deny the demanded miracle, they would have mocked the prophet and the truth toward which he had called them, as well as the signs that they had demanded. It is for this reason that God calls these types of signs "the signs of warning," as He does at the end of the verse under discussion. Otherwise, there is no sense in including all divine signs in the category of warning signs when some of them are mercy for mankind, and guidance and a light for their path.

One of the things that indicate to us that the prohibited signs are the signs of warning is the context of this verse and its narrative. In the preceding verse, God, the Exalted, says:

There is not a township [i.e., a community] that We shall not destroy before the Day of Resurrection, or punish with dire punishment. That is set forth in the Book [of Our decrees] (Qur’an 17:58).

The verse also mentions that the divine sign [the she-camel] is in connection with the Thamud, following which a punishment was inflicted upon them. Their story is mentioned in sura 26, entitled "al-Shu'ara'" (The Poets). However, this verse ends with God's reminder: "We send not the signs save to warn."

All these contextual factors demonstrate that the signs which were withheld were those which had been demanded, and which would have entailed the descent of divine retribution. If we examine the Qur'an sufficiently, it will become so evident to us as to admit no doubt, that the unbelievers of Mecca at times asked for divine retribution to be sent down on them, and on others. They asked for signs which had brought down divine punishment on past communities for demanding, then denying, them. The first type [of signs] includes [the following]:

And when they said, "O God! If this be indeed the truth from You, then rain down stones on us or bring on us some painful doom!" But God would not punish them while you [O, Muhammad] were with them, nor will He punish them while they seek forgiveness (Qur’an 8:32-33). Say, "Have you thought, when this doom comes to you as a raid by night, or in the [busy] day, What is there of it that the guilty ones desire to hasten?" (Qur’an 10:50). And if We delay for them the doom until a reckoned time, they will surely say, "What withholds it?" (Qur’an 11:8). They bid you hasten the doom [of God]. And if a term had not been appointed, the doom would assuredly have come to them [before now]. And verily it will come upon them suddenly when they perceive not (Qur’an 29:53).

As for the other type, it includes [the following]:

And when a sign comes to them, they say, "We will not believe till we are given that which God's messengers are given." God knows best with whom to place His message. Humiliation from God and heavy punishment will smite the guilty for their scheming (Qur’an 6:21). But when there came to them the Truth from Our presence, they said, "Why is he not given the like of what was given to Moses?" Did they not disbelieve in that which was given to Moses of old? They say, "Two magics [the Torah and the Qur'an] that support each other"; and they say, "Lo! In both we are disbelievers" (Qur’an 28:48).

What indicates to us that it was their rejection of demanded divine signs, like those which had earned, for earlier communities, God's retribution, is [the following]:

Those before them plotted, so God struck at the foundations of their building, and then the roof fell down upon them from above them, and the doom came on them whence they knew not (Qur’an 16:26). Those before them denied, and so the doom came on them whence they knew not (Qur’an 39:25).

Those are only a few examples of the numerous indications in the Qur'an concerning what we have said. Moreover, the exegesis of the verse under consideration [17:59], both by Shi’ite and Sunni commentators, supports what we have construed from its apparent sense. In this regard, the following tradition is related on the authority of the Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (peace be upon him):

Some people asked Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) to produce a sign. Gabriel came down and said: "Verily, God says, 'Nothing hinders Us from sending signs save that the folk of old denied them' [Qur’an 17:59]. And if We were to send to the Quraysh a sign and they were not to believe in it, then We would have destroyed them. It is for this reason that We have delayed sending signs to your people."[1]

Another tradition is reported on the authority of lbn 'Abbas, who said:

The people of Mecca asked the Prophet to change [Mount] Safa into gold, and to move away the hills for them so that they could cultivate the land. Thus, he was told [through revelation]: "If you so desire, We shall give them respite for a time [and] perhaps some of them will choose [to believe]; and if you so desire, We shall give them what they want, but if they were to disbelieve, they shall be doomed as were those before them." The Prophet said, "Rather give them time." Thus God, the Exalted, revealed, "Nothing hinders Us from sending signs save that the folk of old denied them . . ." [Qur’an 17:59].[2]

There are other traditions on this subject that can be referred to in the books of traditions and in the exegesis of Tabari.

Other verses that have been used to deny the Prophet any other miracle besides the Qur'an include [the following]:

And they say: "We will not put faith in you till you cause a spring to gush forth from the earth for us; or you have a garden of date-palms and grapes and cause rivers to gush forth therein abundantly; or you cause the heaven to fall upon us piecemeal, as you have pretended, or bring God and angels as a warrant; or you have a house of gold; or you ascend up into

heaven, and even then we will put no faith in your ascension till you bring down for us a letter that we can read." Say [O, Muhammad]: "Glorified is my Lord! Am I naught save mortal messenger?" (Qur'an 17:90-93)

The conclusion which the opponents [of our view] have drawn from these verses is that the unbelievers asked the Prophet to work a miracle which would testify to the truthfulness of his prophethood; but he refused, and admitted his inability, claiming for himself only that he was a mortal sent to them as a messenger. Hence, the verses indicate that the working of miracles was denied him.

The response is as follows:

First, we have already explained to the reader, in our response to the preceding arguments, the circumstances of the demanded signs. The miracles that the unbelievers asked the Prophet to perform were undoubtedly demanded signs, and the unbelievers were predisposed to be obstinate in denying the truth. This is indicated by two things:

l. They had made their acceptance of the Prophet's call conditional upon one of those things that they were demanding. Had they not been obstinate in denying the truth, they would have been satisfied with any divine sign that proved his truthfulness. There was no other reason for them to demand these things specifically to the exclusion of other divine signs.

2. Regarding their saying, "Or you ascend up into heaven, and even then we will put no faith in your ascension till you bring down for us a letter that we can read," what is the point of the stipulation to bring down a letter? Is not ascending to heaven a sufficient sign in itself of his veracity? Or is there not in these vain desires clear evidence of their obstinacy against the truth?

Second, some of the things demanded by the unbelievers in the verses above were impossible [demands] and others were no proof of the truthfulness of a claim to prophethood. Even if it were incumbent on the Prophet (peace be upon him) to acquiesce in their demands, these would not have been the kinds of miracles for him to perform.

To make this clear, there were six things that the Meccan unbelievers demanded from the Prophet in these verses; three of them were impossible, and three, though not impossible, had no connection with establishing the truthfulness of a claim to prophethood.

The first of the three inconceivable things was causing heaven to fall upon them piecemeal. This would entail the destruction of the Earth and the death of its inhabitants. Such a thing would occur only at the end of time. The Prophet had informed them about this, as is evident from their saying, "As you have asserted." The falling of heaven on the Earth is mentioned in several places in the Qur'an, as in God's saying:

When the heaven is split asunder (Qur'an 84: 1); when the heaven is cleft asunder (Qur'an 82: 1). If We will, We can make the earth swallow them or cause obliteration from the sky to fall on them (Qur'an 34:9).

What makes this inconceivable is that its occurrence before its appointed time is incompatible with the survival of mankind and the guidance toward their perfection that wisdom has determined. It is impossible for the All-Wise to act in a way that is incompatible with His wisdom.

The second inconceivable thing demanded by the disbelievers was that the Prophet should bring God so that they meet Him and see Him. This is indeed impossible, for God cannot be seen with the eyes; otherwise, He would be limited in certain ways, and He would have color and countenance, and all this is inconceivable for God. The third inconceivable thing was to bring down a letter from God. What made this impossible was that they wanted a letter sent down that was handwritten by God, and not one that could be created and brought into being. This may be inferred from the fact that if they had meant a letter sent down through any means possible, there was no reasonable ground for demanding that it should come from heaven. An earthly letter would have served the purpose just as well as a heavenly one. There is no doubt that what they demanded was impossible because it would have required that God should possess a body with limbs. Exalted is God from all this, Sublime and Supreme.

The other three things, although possible, had no bearing on the truthfulness of the claim to be a prophet. This is because causing a spring to gush forth from the Earth, or owning a garden of date-palms and grapes and abundant rivers, or owning a house of gold-these things have no connection with the claim to be a prophet. Many people have one of them, yet they are not prophets. Indeed, some people have all three of them, yet they are not necessarily believers, let alone prophets. Since these things have no bearing on the claim of prophethood, and do not prove its veracity, producing them in the context of proving this veracity would be a futile act that a wise prophet would not perform.

Some individuals may delude themselves into believing that these three things do not prove the veracity of a prophet only when they are realized through conventional and familiar means. But if they are realized through extraordinary means, then there would be no doubt that they are divine signs, which confirm the truthfulness of a prophethood.

The response to this is as follows. In itself, this is correct. But the unbelievers wanted these things even through the conventional means, for they found it inconceivable that a divine messenger should be poor and without possessions:

And they say, "If only this Qur'an had been revealed to some great man of the two towns [Mecca and Ta'if] (Qur'an 43:31).

Consequently, they asked that the Prophet be a wealthy person. What indicates this is that they qualified their demand by asking that the garden and the house of gold should belong exclusively to the Prophet. Had they truly wanted these things to serve as miracles, then there would have been no valid reason for this condition; rather, there was no reason for them to demand the garden and the house, for it would have been sufficient to produce a single grape or a little bit of gold.

As for the unbelievers saying, "Till you cause a spring to gush forth from the earth for us," there is no evidence in it that they were asking for the spring for them, and not for the Prophet, but simply that they were asking him to make it gush forth for their sake. The difference between the two senses is clear. Moreover, the Prophet did not admit to them his inability to perform the miracle, as those [who subscribe to the view under discussion]

have imagined erroneously. Rather, what he made clear to them by saying, "Glorified is my Lord" is that God is above any incapacity; that He is capable of anything possible; that He is above being seen or encountered; that

He is above being commanded to do something that the unbelievers demanded; and that the Prophet was a human being commanded by God, the Exalted, to whom alone belong all the commands-and He does what He wishes and commands what He wills.

Another verse employed by those who deny that the Prophet performed any miracle other than the Qur'an is God's saying:

And they will say, "If only a sign were sent down upon him from his Lord!" Then say [O Muhammad]: "The unseen belongs to God. So wait! Lo, I am waiting with you" (Qur’an 10:20).

What they deduced from the verse is that the unbelievers demanded a divine sign from the Prophet, and that he did not mention any miracles of his. Instead, he replied to them that the unseen belongs to God. This proves that he did not have any miracle except what he had brought in the Qur'an.

A number of other verses are close to this in meaning. They include God's saying:

Those who disbelieve say, "If only some sign were sent down upon him from His Lord!" You are a warner only, and for every community a guide (Qur’an 13:7). They say, "Why has no sign been sent down upon him from His Lord?" Say, "Lo! God is able to send down a sign." But most of them know not (Qur’an 6:37).

The response to this is as follows.

First, as we said above, these unbelievers and others like them were not asking the Prophet to produce divine signs that would establish his truthfulness. They, rather, asked him to produce special signs. This is clarified in many places of the Qur'an. Thus, for instance, God, the Exalted, says:

They say, "Why has not an angel been sent down to them?" (Qur’an 6:8). And they say: "O you to whom the Reminder is revealed; lo! you are indeed a madman! Why bring you not angels to us, if you are of the truthful?" (Qur’an 15:6-7); And they say: "What ails this messenger [of God] that he eats food and walks in the markets? Why is not an angel sent down to him, to be a warner with him, or [why is not] a treasure thrown down unto him, or why has he not a paradise from whence to eat?" And the evildoers say, "You are but following a man bewitched" (Qur’an 25:7-8).

We already noted that signs should not be produced on demand. Moreover, the unbelievers wanted only the signs they were demanding. What indicates this to us is the fact that, had they wanted the Prophet to produce just any sign that proved his veracity, he would have certainly responded by pointing to the Qur'an, by which he indeed challenged them in many of its passages. What is, in reality, clear from the verses used as evidence by the opponents [of miracles other than the Qur'an], and from similar other verses, are the following two points:

1. The challenge of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) to all people was made specifically with the Qur'an [and not with any] of his

other miracles. This had to be so, as we explained above, because the everlasting prophethood requires the eternal miracle, and this can only be the Qur'an, for none of his other miracles could be expected to possess continuity.

2. The working of miracles was not the Prophet's own choice. He was only a messenger, subject in this matter to the permission of God, the Exalted. Accordingly, the demand of the disbelievers had no role in this matter. This applies to other prophets as well. The following revelations by God, the Exalted, point to this fact:

It was not [given] to any messenger that he should bring a sign, save by God's leave. For everything, there is a time prescribed (Qur'an 13:38). And it was not given to any messenger that he should bring a sign, save by God's leave, but when God's commandment comes [the cause] is judged aright, and the followers of vanity will then be lost (Qur'an 40:78).

Second, the Qur'an also contains verses which indicate that miracles issued from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny). Among these are God's saying:

The hour drew nigh and the moon was split in twain. And if they behold a sign (aya), they turn away and say, "Prolonged illusion" (Qur'an 54: 1-2). And when a sign (aya) comes to them, they say, "We will not believe till we are given that which God's messengers are given" (Qur'an 6: 124).

Several things indicate to us that aya here means a miraculous sign [rather than a Qur'anic verse].[3] The [first verse] speaks of seeing the aya. Had the reference been to the verses of the Qur'an, the correct expression would have been "hearing" it. "Seeing" the aya is, moreover, conjoined with the splitting of the moon. Finally, [the second verse] ascribes to the aya the act of "coming" to them, rather than of "descending," or any of the other expressions [used from the Qur'anic revelation]. In fact, their words "prolonged illusion" are evidence of miracles repeatedly performed by the Prophet. Consequently, if we were to concede that the previous verses deny his performance of miracles, then the denial applies only to the time when these verses were revealed. It cannot possibly apply to any subsequent period.

The summary of what has been said above is as follows:

1. There is no evidence, in any of the verses of the Qur'an, that would deny the occurrence of other miracles besides the Qur'an. On the contrary, a number of verses contain evidence that proves the occurrence of other miracles, which the opponents [of this view] allege to have been denied by the Qur'an.

2. Producing a miracle was not something which the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) could decide of his own free will. It was in the hands of God, the Glorified.

3. When a claim to prophethood is made, what is needed is a miracle which proves the claim and on which its verification depends. Any miracle which exceeds this purpose is not incumbent upon God to manifest, nor should the Prophet respond if one were demanded.

4. Any miracle which entails doom and torment for the community is forbidden for that community. It must not be performed in response to a

demand from the community, regardless of whether that was [made] by all or some of its members.

5. The lasting miracle of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), by which he challenged all the communities until the Day of Resurrection, is the revealed Book of God. As for his other miracles, they are not lasting, no matter how numerous they were. In this respect they share the characteristics of miracles [performed] by the earlier prophets.

The Annunciation of Muhammad's Prophethood in the Torah and the Gospel

The Qur'an states in a number of its verses that Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them) announced the good tidings of the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) and that this annunciation was mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel. God, the Exalted, says in regard to this:

I shall prescribe it [my mercy] for those who follow the Messenger, the u nlettered Prophet, whom they will find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel, enjoining on them that which is right and forbidding them that which is wrong (Qur'an 7: 157). And . . . Jesus, son of Mary, said, "O, Children of Israel, lo! I am the messenger of God to you, confirming that which was [revealed] before me in the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a messenger who comes after me, whose name is Ahmad"[4] (Qur'an 61:6).

Hence, many Jews and Christians, during and after Muhammad's lifetime, believed in his prophethood. This is conclusive evidence that this annunciation still existed in the texts of the two ancient scriptures at the time of his message. Had they not been there, the Jews and Christians would have possessed sufficient proof to deny the Qur'an's claim and to reject the Prophet's call, and they would have rejected him vehemently. The fact that so many of them embraced Islam and believed the Prophet's call, during and after his time, is indisputable evidence that the text of the annunciation was still preserved at that time. Accordingly, faith in Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them) necessitated faith in Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny), without requiring any miracle to establish his veracity.

However, a miracle was necessary [to establish his veracity] for other communities that did not believe in Moses and Jesus and their revelations. It has been established earlier that the Noble Qur'an is the lasting miracle and the divine proof of the truthfulness of the Prophet and the veracity of his mission. Moreover, his numerous other miracles, which have been related by uninterrupted transmission, are more worthy of belief than the miracles performed by the other prophets who preceded him.

Notes

1. Hashim b. Sulayman al-Bahrani, Kitab al-Burhanfi Tafsir al-Qur'an, ed. Mahmud b.Ja'far al-Musawi al-Zarandi, 4 vols. (Tehran: Chapkhane Aftab, n.d.) vol. 2, p. 424.

2. Tabari, Tafsir, vol. 15, p. 74

3. The word aya serves both meanings.-Trans.

4. Ahmad (the Most Praised One) is an alternative name for the Prophet Muhammad.-Trans.

4. Insight about the Readers of the Qur'an

Synopsis: The biographies of the Seven Readers: 'Abd Allah b. 'Amir al-Dimishqi; lbn Kathir al-Makki; 'Asim b. Bahdala al-Kufi; Abu 'Amr al-Basri; Hamza al-Kufi; Nafi' al-Madani; al-Kisa'i al-Kufi. And the three other readers: Khalaf b. Hisham al- Bazzar; Ya'qub b. Ishaq; Yazid b. al-Qa'qa'.

Opinions have varied about the seven famous readings of the Qur'an that are most commonly known among people. A number of Sunni scholars have maintained that all of them have been reported through uninterrupted transmission (tawatur)[1] from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny). This is sometimes assumed to be the most common view among them. It has been maintained, on the authority of al- Subki, that the readings reported by uninterrupted transmission are ten in number.[2] Some of them have gone so far as to assert that whoever maintains that the seven readings of the Qur'an need not be reported by uninterrupted transmission has committed an act of disbelief. This radical opinion has been attributed to the Mufti of Andalusia, Abil Sa'id Faraj b. Lubb.[3]

Among Shi'ites, it is commonly known that these readings have not been reported by uninterrupted transmission; rather, some of them are based on the personal reasoning (ijtihad) of the reader; and others, on single narrations (khabar al-wahid).[4] This opinion has been adopted by a group of Sunni scholars and is most likely to be the prevalent one among them, as we shall note. It is certainly the correct view. In order to verify this conclusion, it is necessary to mention two points:

First, Muslims of all sects and schools of thought are in agreement that the immutability of the Qur'an is established only on [its] uninterrupted transmission. A number of Sunni and Shi'ite scholars have deduced this from the fact that there are sufficient reasons to ensure the uninterrupted transmission of the Qur'an. It is, after all, the foundation of the Islamic faith and the divine miracle for the mission of the Prophet of all Muslims, and anything with sufficient reasons for being transmitted is bound to be transmitted uninterruptedly and reliably [from the source]. For this reason, whatever has been transmitted through a single narration is definitely not from the Qur'an.

Conversely, al-Suyuti reports that "al-Qadi Abu Bakr says in his book al-Intisar: 'A number of jurists and theologians have maintained that small sections of the Qur'an, transmitted through a single narration, can be lawfully considered part of it, though not with certainty. Such an opinion has been regarded as reprehensible by the people of the Truth [i.e., the Sunnis], and they have refused to accept it."'[5]

This view [expressed by] al-Qadi Abu Bakr is evidently wrong for the same reason mentioned above-namely, that the existence of sufficient reasons for transmission is in itself indisputable evidence of the falsehood of reports that are transmitted on the authority of one or two narrators. Thus, if we were informed by one person or two persons that a great king had arrived in a city, and if the arrival of that king in that city were something which normally was impossible to hide from the people, then we would have no doubt of the falsehood of this report if no one besides the one or two persons reported it. And since it was manifestly false, how could it

bring about the effects which result from the king's arrival in that city? Similarly, if a part of the Qur'an were transmitted through a single narration, then this would be a definite proof that what had been transmitted was not part of the divine speech. Since its falsehood is thus established, how can one follow the commands contained in it?

At any rate, Muslims have never disagreed that the authenticity of the Qur'anic text, as well as the fact that it is a divine speech, are both confirmed solely by uninterrupted transmission.

This makes it clear that there is no interdependency between the uninterrupted transmission of the Qur'an and the lack of uninterruption in the transmission of the readings. This is because the evidence for the uninterrupted transmission of the Qur'an and its necessity does not in any way establish that its readings have been transmitted without interruption. Similarly, the evidence against the uninterrupted transmission of the readings does not in any way reflect on the uninterrupted transmission of the Qur'an itself.

Second, the best way to prove the lack of uninterrupted transmission of the readings of the Qur'an is to investigate the careers of the readers themselves, who are seven in number, as well as of those who transmitted from them. To these seven we must add three, to make ten; we will turn to the three after we deal with the seven. [Indeed], we will give their biographies and investigate their circumstances one by one.

'Abd Allah b. 'Amir al-Dimishqi

He was known by his patronymic, Abu 'Imran al-Yahsabi. He studied the Qur'an with al-Mughira b. Abi Shihab. Al-Haytham b. 'Imran says: "'Abd Allah b. 'Amir was the leader of the people in the mosque during the reign of [the Umayyad] al- Walid b. 'Abd al-Malik. He used to claim that he was of the Himyar stock, but used to be challenged in this claim." According to al-'Ijli and al-Nasa'i, he was reliable. Abu 'Amr al-Dani says, "He was appointed chief judge of Damascus after Bilal b. Abi Darda'. . . . The people of Syria regarded him as an authority for his reading [of the Qur'an] and his choice [of a variant reading]." [6] Further information about his career is provided by Ibn al-Jazari, who says: "Nine different narratives have been transmitted about him, of which the most authentic is the one which says that he studied the Qur'an with al-Mughira"; however, adds lbn al-Jazari, some narratives quote him as saying that "he did not know with whom he studied the recitation."[7] He was born in the year 8 A.H. (629 CE), and he died in 118 A.H. (736 CE).

'Abd Allah b. 'Amir had two transmitters who learned his reading of the Qur'an from intermediary authorities. These [transmitters] were Hisham and lbn Dhakwan.

As for Hisham, his full name was lbn 'Ammar b. Nuayr b. Maysara. He acquired the reading of the Qur'an by presenting it to Ayyub b. Tamim. According to Yahya b. Mu'in, Hisham was reliable; according to al-Nasa'i, he was acceptable. Al- Daraqutfil says, "He was truthful and highly esteemed."[8] He was born in the year 153 A.H. (770 C.E.), and he died in the year 245 (859 C.E.).

According to al-Ajuri, who reported on the authority of Abu Dawud, "Abu Ayyub"-that is, Sulayman b. 'Abd al-Rahman-"was better than him [Hisham]. Hisham transmitted four hundred traditions, supported by chains of transmission which were baseless." lbn Wara says, "For a long time I intended to refrain from studying the tradition with Hisham, because he used to charge money for relating it." Salih b. Muhammad reports that Hisham "used to take from me the tradition [free of charge], but would not relate a tradition without being paid. . . . Al-Marwazi reports that Ahmad [b. Hanbal] mentioned Hisham, saying that he was confused and insignificant. Ahmad went on to relate a specific example of Hisham's reading, of which he disapproved to the extent that he declared that 'anyone who prays behind him, he should repeat the prayer. '"[9]

As for those who transmitted the reading of the Qur'an on his authority, the sources are in disagreement. Thus, one should refer to Tabaqat al-Qurra' and other such sources.

As for lbn Dhakwan, his full name was 'Abd Allah b. Ahmad b. Bashir. He was also known as Bashir b. Dhakwan. He studied the Qur'an by presenting it to Ayyub b. Tamim. According to Abu 'Amr al-Hafiz:(he also studied with al-Kisa'i when the latter came to Damascus. He was born on the day of 'Ashura' ['l0 Muharram] in the year 173 A.H. (789 c.E.), and he died in the year 242 (856 c.E.). [10]

Concerning those who transmitted the reading of the Qur'an on his authority, none of them are known.

Ibn Kathir al-Makki

His full name was 'Abd Allah b. Kathir b. 'Amr b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Abd Allah b. Zadhan b. Rruzan b. Hurmuz al-Makki al-Dari; [he was] of Persian origin. According to Kitab al-Taysir, he acquired the reading of the Qur'an by presenting it to 'Abd Allah b. al- Sa'ib. This opinion has been accepted as definitive by al-Hafiz, Abu 'Amr al-Dani and others. However, he was declared weak by al-Hafiz Abu al-'Ala' al-Hamadani, who said, "He is not known among us."[11] Ibn Kathir also presented his reading [for authoritative approval] to Mujahid b. Jabr and Darbas, the client of 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas. He was born in Mekka in 45 A.H. (665 C.E.) and died in 120 A.H. (738 C.E.). 'Ali b. al-Mudayni regarded him as reliable, and so did Ibn Sa'd. Abu 'Amr al-Dani mentions that "he learned the reading of the Qur'an from 'Abd Allah b. al-Sa'ib al- Makhzumi," but the generally accepted view is that he studied with Mujahid. [12]

Ibn Kathir had two transmitters, al-Buzzi and Qanbal, who learned his reading through intermediary authorities.

As for al-Buzzi, his full name was Ahmad b. Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah b. al-Qasim b. Nafi' b. Abi Buzza. He was also known as Bashshar, and he was of Persian origin, from Hamadan. He converted to Islam at the hand of al-Sa'ib b. Abi al-Sa'ib al- Makhzumi. According to Ibn al-Jazari, he was a meticulous teacher, with a precise memory. He was born in 170 A.H. (786 C.E.) and died in 250 A.H. (864 C.E.).[13] Al-Buzzi studied with Abu al-Hasan Ahmad b. Muhammad b. 'Alqama, known as Qawwas, and with Abu al-Akhrit Wahab b. Wadih al-Makki and 'Abd Allah b. Ziyad b. 'Abd Allah b. Yasar al-Makki[14] However, according to al-'Uqayli, "his transmission of

the tradition was rejected"; similarly, Abu Hatim says that "he was weak in the transmission of the tradition-I do not report on his authority." [15]

Concerning those who studied the reading with him, the authorities are in disagreement.

As for Qanbal, his full name was Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Rahman b. Khalid b. Muhammad Abu 'Amr al-Makhzumi; [he was] the client of al-Makki. He acquired his reading of the Qur'an by presenting it to Ahmad b. Muhammad b. 'Awn al-Nabbal, who later deputized him to teach in Mekka. Qanbal also transmitted the reading on the authority of al-Buzzi The leadership of those who taught the Qur'an in Hijaz eventually passed to him, and he also held the position of chief of police in Mekka. He was born in 195 A.H. (810 C.E.), and he died in 291 A.H. (903 C.E.).[16] [But after he was made] chief of police, his character was tarnished. As he advanced in age, he became infirm and deteriorated mentally. Thus he stopped teaching the reading of the Qur'an seven years before his death. [17]

Concerning those who transmitted his reading of the Qur'an, the authorities are in disagreement.

'Asim b. Bahdala al-Kufi

His full name was Ibn AbI al-Nujud Abu Bakr al-Asadi; [his tribe was a] client of the Asad of Kufa. He acquired the reading of the Qur'an by presenting it to Zarr b. Hubaysh, Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami, and Abu 'Amr al-Shaybani. Abu Bakr b. al-Shaybani reports that 'Asim told him, "No one has taught me even one letter of the Qur'an except 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami. I used to leave him and present the reading to Zarr [for his critical approval]." Hafs reports that 'Asim also told him, "The reading that I have taught you is the one I learned from Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami, who transmitted it [on the authority of] 'Ali [b. Abi Talib]. And the reading that I have taught to Abu Bakr b. 'Ayyash is the one that I presented to Zarr b. Hubaysh [for his critical approval], which is the reading [he received on the authority] of lbn Mas'ud. [18]

Ibn Sa'd says that 'Asim was "reliable, but made mistakes in the transmission of the tradition." 'Abd Allah b. Ahmad reports, from his father, that 'Aim was "a prolific and reliable authority; however, al-A'mash memorized [the tradition] more correctly." Al-'Ijli says that "he ['Asim] had a compilation of traditions and a reading [of the Qur'an]. He was a reliable authority and one of the leading readers . . . and he was a supporter of 'Uthman." Ya'qub b. Sufyan says, "His transmission of the tradition contained some confusion; nevertheless, he is reliable." lbn 'Ulayya also was critical of him, saying, "Everyone named 'Asim was faulty in memorizing the tradition." According to al-Nasa'i, "He is acceptable," but, according to lbn Kharash, "His transmission of the tradition contains some deniable things." Al-'Uqayli says, "He had no problem except poor memorization of the tradition." Al-Daraqutni also found fault with his memory, while Hammad b. Salma reports that "'Asim became confused toward the end of his life." He died in 127 or 128 A.H. (745 or 746 C.E.). [19]

'Aim b. Bahdala's reading was transmitted by two persons directly from him: Hafs and Abu Bakr.

As for Hafs, he was lbn Sulayman al-Asadi, who was raised by 'Asim. According to al-Dhahabi, "Hafs was reliable in his reading, consistent and accurate, but not so in the transmission of the tradition." Hafs himself said that he "did not depart from 'Asim's reading except in one word in "Surat al-Rum" [Sura 30, The Romans] verse 54, where Hafs read the word as du'f in 'God is He who shaped you out of weakness,' whereas 'Asim read it as daf." Hafs was born in 90 A.H. (708 C.E.) and died in 180 A.H. (796 C.E.).[20]

Ibn Abi Hatim reported from 'Abd Allah, who had reported from his father: "His [Haf 's] transmission of the tradition was rejected." Moreover, 'Uthman al-Darimi and others have related, on the authority of lbn Mu'in, that he was not reliable. lbn al-Madini says that "Hafs was weak in the tradition, and I intentionally avoided [transmitting] from him." Al-Bukhari states that he was rejected by the compilers [of biographical dictionaries]. A similar opinion was held by Muslim. Al-Nasa'i considered him untrustworthy and [said] that the traditions he transmitted were not recorded. Salih b. Muhammad says, "His traditions were not recorded, and all of them were objectionable." lbn Kharash went as far as declaring him "a liar, rejected for fabricating traditions." lbn Hayyan said: "He used to change the chains of transmission, and even fabricated chains for those traditions that did not have ones." Ibn al-Jawzi, in his section on the fabrication of traditions, quotes 'Abd al-Rahman al-Muhdi, who said, "I solemnly declare that it is not permissible to transmit [traditions] on his [Haf 's] authority." Al-Daraqutni declared him weak, and al-Saji said, "Hafs is one of those whose traditions have disappeared. What he transmitted contained objectionable traditions." [21]

As in the case of other readers of the Qur'an, the authorities are not in agreement about who transmitted from him.

As for Abu Bakr, his full name was Shu'ba b. 'Ayyash b. Salim al-Hannat al-Asadi al-Kufi. According to lbn al-Jazari, "He presented his reading for critical approval to 'Asim three times, and to 'Ata' b. al-Sa'ib and Aslam al-Manqari. He lived long, but stopped teaching seven years before his death, and some say even longer than that. He was a great religious authority, learned, and active in devotion. He used to say, 'I am half of Islam.' He was one of the great scholars of prophetic tradition. When he was on his deathbed and his sister was crying, he asked her: 'What makes you cry? Look at that corner. I completed eighteen thousand recitations of the Qur'an there."' He was born in the year 95 A.H. (713 C.E.) and died in 193 or 194 A.H. (808 or 809 C.E.).[22]

'Abd Allah b. Ahmad [b. Hanbal] reported, on the authority of his father, that "he [Abu Bakr] was reliable, though sometimes inaccurate." 'Uthman al-Darimi regarded him as weak in the transmission of traditions. lbn Abi Hatim reported that he asked his father about Abu Bakr b. 'Ayyash and Abu al-Ahwas. He said, "I do not approbate either of the two." However, according to lbn Sa'd, "He was reliable, honest, knowledgeable about the tradition and juridical decision ('ilm), but committed many errors." Ya'qub b. Shayba said, "His transmission of the tradition contained some confusion." Abu Nu'aym declared that "there was none among our teachers

who committed more errors than him." According to al-Bazzar, "Abu Bakr did not memorize the tradition properly."[23]

Abu 'Amr al-Basri

His full name was Zuban b. al-'Ala' b. Ammar al-Mazini al-Bari. It is said that he was from Fars. He accompanied his father when the latter fled from al-Hajjaj, and he studied the reading of the Qur'an in Mekka and Medina. He also studied it in Kufa and Basra with a number of people. Indeed, none among the seven readers [of the Qur'an] had as many teachers as he [had]. The people of Syria used to follow the reading of lbn 'Amir and abandoned it only toward the end of the [eighth] century. This was because a person who came from Iraq instructed the people in the Umayyad Mosque according to the reading of Abu 'Amr. This reading became well known through him in Syria. Al-Asma'i says, "I heard Abu 'Amr saying, 'I do not know of anyone before me more learned than myself.'"[24] He was born in 68 A.H. (687 C.E.) and, as reported by many, died in the year 154 A.H. (770 C.E.).

Al-Duri reports, on the authority of Ibn Mu'in, that he [Abu 'Amr] was regarded as trustworthy. On the other hand, Abu Khaythama has reported that "there is no objection to Abu 'Amr b. 'Ala' except that he did not memorize the traditions." Nasr b. 'Ali al-Jahdami reports that his father said, "I was told by Shu'ba: 'Pay close attention to what Abu 'Amr reads; and whatever he chooses for himself, write it down, because he is going to become a master [in this matter] for the people.'" In his book al-Tahdhrb, Abu Mu'awiya al-Azhari says that Abu 'Amr was among the most learned of the people about the variant readings and Arabic terminology, and the rare as- pects of their speech, and their most eloquent poetry.[24] Abu 'Amr's readings were transmitted by two transmitters, who learned it from Yahiya b. al-Mubarak al-Yazidi. These were al-Duri and al-Susi.

As for Yahiya b. al-Mubarak, Ibn al-Jazari reports that "he was a grammarian, a teacher of the Qur'an, reliable, and highly educated." He settled in Baghdad and became known as al-Yazidi because of his connection with Yazid b. Mansur al- Himyari, the maternal uncle of the [Abbasid caliph] al-Mahdi, the education of whose children he undertook. He acquired his reading by presenting it for critical approval to Abu 'Amr, who, in turn, deputized him to teach it. He also studied with Hamza [another reader]. Abu Amr al-Duri and Abu Shu'ayb al-Susi transmitted the reading on his [al-Yazidi's] authority. He held certain opinions [based on his own judgment] in which he disagreed with Abu 'Amr on a few points. Ibn Mujahid remarks that "we relied on al-Yazidi--despite the fact that other associates of Abu 'Amr were more excellent than him-because he assumed the responsibility of transmitting Abu 'Amr' s reading and devoted himself exclusively to it, engaging in nothing else. He was regarded as the most accurate of them all." He died in 202 A.H. (817 C.E.) in Marw at the age of seventy-four. Some have said that he was past ninety or close to one hundred. [25]

As for al-Duri, his full name was Hafs b. 'Amr b. 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Duri al-Azadi al-Baghdadi. According to Ibn al-Jazari, he was reliable, trustworthy, an accurate recorder of readings, and the first to compile the

various readings [of the Qur'an]. He died in the month of Shawwal in the year 246 A.H. (860 C.E.)[26] Al-Daraqutni regarded him as weak, whereas al-'Uqayli considered him reliable. [27] As for those who learned the reading from him, the authorities are in disagreement.

As for al-Susi, his full name was Abu Shu'ayb Salihi b. Ziyad b. 'Abd Allah. Ibn al-Jazari regarded him as an accurate recorder in writing and reliable. He studied the reading of the Qur'an both by presenting it for critical confirmation and by carefully listening to Abu Muhiammad al-Yazidi. In fact, he was among his most prominent associates. He died in his late sixties in the early part of the year 261A.H. (874 C.E.)[28] Abu Hatim regarded him as honest, and al-Nasa'i considered him reliable. Ibn Hayyan counted him among the reliable transmitters. According to Abu 'Amr al-Dani, "al-Nasai transmitted the readings on his authority, whereas Muslim b. Qasim al-Andalusi regarded him as weak and without documentation." [29]As for those who transmitted the reading on his authority, the authorities are in disagreement regarding them.

Hamza al-Kufi

His full name was Ibn Habib b. 'Ammara b. Isma'il Abu 'Ammara al-Kufi al-Tamimi. He was a young contemporary of the Prophet's companions. He acquired his reading of the Qur'an by presenting it to Sulayman al-A'mash and Humran b. A'yan for critical authorization. It is reported, in the book al-Kifaya al-Kubra wa al-Taysir, that he learned the reading of the Qur'an with Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Rahman b. Abi Layla and with Talha b. Masraf; whereas, in al-Taysir, it is mentioned that he learned it from Mughira b. Maqsam, Mansur, and Layth b. Abi Sulaym. Still, in al-Taysir wa al-Mustanir, it is related that he learned his reading from Ja'far b. Muhammad al- Sadiq (peace be upon him). All these sources mention that Hamza "began his reciting of the Qur'an with Humran, and presented his reading to al-A'mash, Abu Ishaq, and Ibn Abi Layla for confirmation. After 'Asim and al-A'mash, the leadership in the reading passed to him. He was a master in his field, a competent authority, reliable and trustworthy, and incomparable. According to 'Abd Allah al-'Ijli, Abu Hanifa told Hamza, "In two things you have achieved supremacy over us and we are not [as strong] in them: the Qur'an and [your performance of the religious] obligations." Sufyan al-Thawri said that "Hamza achieved supremacy over people in the matter of the Qur'an and the performance of the obligations." 'Abd Allah b. Musa said,

"His teacher al-A'mash used to say, whenever he saw him coming, 'This is the authority on the Qur'an.'" He was born in the year 80 A.H. (699 C.E.) and died in 156A.H. (772 C.E.).[30]

Ibn Mu'in regarded him as reliable, and al-Nasa'i considered him acceptable. Al- 'Ijli also regarded him as a reliable and righteous individual. According to Ibn Sa'd, "He was a righteous person who knew the traditions. He was truthful and had a compilation." According to al-Saji, "He was truthful but of poor memory and not exact in his transmission of the traditions." He was also criticized by a group of traditionists (ahl al-Hadith) for his reading of the Qur'an, to the extent that some of them invalidated the prayer if the recitation followed his reading. Al-Saji and al-Azdi have both

reported that "some people criticized his reading and ascribed [its defectiveness] to a reprehensible habit of his." Moreover, al-Saji adds that he heard Saluma b. Shabib say that "Ahmad [b. Hanbal] used to dislike praying behind anyone who adopted Hamza's reading of the Qur'an." Al-Ajuri has reported, on the authority of Ahmad b Sinan, that "Yazid b. Harun used to severely disapprove of Hamza's reading." Ahmad b. Sinan heard Ibn Muhdi say that "if I had the authority over those who follow Hamza's reading, I would have had them flogged." Abu Bakr b. 'Ayyash declared that "in our opinion, Hamza's reading is a sinful innovation." Ibn Durayd said, "I would like to see Hamza's reading out of Kufa."[31]

Hamza's reading was transmitted by Khalaf b. Hisham and Khallad b. Khalid, both of whom learned it through intermediary authorities.

As for Khalaf, his full name was Abu Muhiammad al-Asadi b. Hisham b. Tha'lab al-Bazzar al-Baghdadi. According to Ibn al-Jazari, "He was one of the ten readers, and one of those who transmitted the reading on the authority of Sulaym, who transmitted it from Hamza. He had memorized the Qur'an at the age of ten, and started seeking knowledge at the age of thirteen. He was trustworthy, prominent, ascetic, pious, and learned." Ibn Ashta has related that "Khalaf followed Hamza in his reading, but differed from him on 120 letters."[32] He was born in 150 A.H. (767 C.E.), and he died in 229 A.H. (843 C.E.).

According to al-Lalka'i, "'Abbas al-Duri was asked about the story related, on the authority of Ahimad b. Hanbal, regarding Khalaf b. Hisham. He [al-DurI] said, 'I did not hear it directly from him, but my associates told me that they mentioned Khalaf in Ahmad b. Hanbal's presence, and it was said that he used to drink.' Ahmad then commented on this, saying, 'We have heard of this. Nevertheless, by God, he is regarded by us as reliable and trustworthy.'" Al-Nasa'i regarded him as reliable. Al- Daraquni declared him pious and learned, and added that Khalaf used to say, "I have performed my prayers repeatedly for forty years during which, in accordance with the rulings of the Kufans, I used to drink wine." Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, in his history of Baghdad, relates, on the authority of Muhammad b. Hatim al-Kindi: "I asked Yahya b. Mu'in about Khalafal-Bazzar. He said, 'He did not even know [about] the science of tradition ['ilm al-Hadith].' "[33]

As for those who transmitted the reading from him, we shall mention them later. As for Khallad b. Khalid, his full name was Abu 'Isa al-Shaybani al-Kufi. According to Ibn al-Jazari, "He was a master of Qur'an reading, reliable, knowledgeable, a careful investigator [of the authenticity of traditions], and a teacher." He received his reading of the Qur'an by presenting it for confirmation to Sulaym, and was regarded as one of the most meticulous and prominent among his associates. He died in the year 220 A.H. (835 C.E.).

As for those who transmitted the reading from him, the sources are in disagreement.

Nafi' al-Madani

His full name was Naji' b. 'Abd al-Rahiman b. Abi Nu'aym. According to Ibn al- Jazari, "He is one of the seven readers and a prominent scholar, reliable and righteous, and is originally from Isfahan." He acquired the

reading of the Qur'an by presenting it [for critical approval] to a second-generation group of the Prophet's companions (tabin) in Medina. Sa'id b. Manur heard Malik b. Anas say, "The reading of the people of Medina is in accordance with the tradition of the Prophet." When he was asked if he meant the reading of Nafi', he replied affirmatively. 'Abd Allah, the son of Ahmad b. Hanbal, asked his father about which reading he liked most. He said, "The reading of the people of Medina." 'Abd Allah went on to ask, "What if that is not available?" Ahmad b. Hanbal replied, "[The reading of] 'Aim." Nafi' died in the year 169 A.H. (785 C.E.)[34]

Abu Talib reported that Ahmad b. Hanbal said, "People used to learn the reading of the Qur'an from Nafi', but he was not good in the transmission of the traditions." Al-Durr, following the opinion of Ibn Mu'in, regarded him as trustworthy, whereas al-Nasa'i considered him acceptable. Ibn Hayyan mentioned him among the reliable persons. Al-Saji declared him honest, but related that "Ahmad and Yahya disagreed regarding him. Whereas Ahmad regarded his transmission of the tradition as objectionable, Yahya considered him reliable."[35]

Nafi' had two direct transmitters of his reading: Qalun and Warash.

As for Qalun, his full name was 'Isa b. Mina' b. Wardan Abu Musa. He was a client of the Banu [clan] Zuhra. It is said that he was brought up by Nafi', who was the one to nickname him Qalun for the excellence of his reading, since the term qiilun in Greek meant "good." However, according to 'Abd Allah b. 'Ali, Nafi' used to call him that because Qalun was Byzantine in origin because of his great grandfather, 'Abd Allah, having been a Byzantine war captive. He acquired the reading of the Qur'an by presenting it for critical confirmation by Nafi'. Ibn Abi Hatim relates that Qalun was deaf. He used to teach the Qur'an and catch the students' errors in pronunciation and intonation by lip-reading. He was born in 120 A.H. (737 C.E.) and died in 220 A.H. (835 C.E.).[36]

According to Ibn Hajar, "As for his reading, he is reliable; but as for the tradition, only little of what he transmitted is worth recording." Ahmad b.Salihi al-Miri was asked about his traditions. He smiled and said, "Should one record [the traditions] from anyone [who transmits them]?"[37]

As for those who transmitted the reading from him, the authorities are in disagreement.

As for Warash, his full name was 'Uthman b. Sa'Id. According to Ibn al-JazarI, "He succeeded to the leadership of those who taught the reading of the Qur'an in Egypt during his time. The reading which he chose was at variance with Nafi''s. He was a reliable and competent authority in Qur'an reading." [38] He was born in 110 A.H. (728 C.E.) in Egypt and died there in 197 A.H. (812 C.E.).

As for those who transmitted the reading from him, the authorities are in disagreement.

Al-Kisa' al-Kufi

His full name was 'Ali b. Hamza b. 'Abd Allah b. Rahman b. Firiuz al-Asadi. He was a client of the Banu Asad, and of Persian descent. According to Ibn al-Jazari, "He was the leader in this field, [the one] upon whom the leadership of the readers in Kufa devolved after the death of Hamza and al-

Zayyat." He acquired his reading from Hamza, to whom he presented it four times for approval, and on whom he depended. Abu 'Ubayd, in his book on the readings, says: "Al-Kisa'i was selective in his adoption of readings. He has accepted some of Hamza' s reading and rejected other parts of it." There is a difference of opinion regarding the year in which he died. The most accurate one seems to be the one recorded by more than one scholar, and [especially by] the scholars of the tradition (huffaz), namely, 189 A.H. (804 C.E.). He had learned the reading by memorizing it [in studying with] Hamza al-Zayyat, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Rahman b. Abi Layla, 'Isa b. 'Amr al-A'mash, and Abu Bakr b. 'Ayyash- with all of whom he studied the tradition-and from Sulayman b. Arqam, Ja'far al- Sadiq (peace be upon him), al-'Azrami, and Ibn 'Uyayna. . . . He tutored the Abbasid Hamn al-Rashid [in the reading] and his son al-Amin.[39]

Al-Marzubani relates, on the authority of Ibn al-'Arabi, that "al-Kisa'i was one of the most learned persons, but used to do forbidden things, constantly drinking wine and openly admitting to [homosexuality]. Yet he was an accurate reader [of the Qur'an], knowledgeable in the Arabic language, and honest."[40]

Al-Kisa'i had two direct transmitters: al-Layth b. Khalid and Hafs b. 'Umar.

As for al-Layth, his full name was Abu al-Harith b. Khalid al-Baghdadi. According to Ibn al-Jazari, he was reliable, well known, and a competent recorder [of the reading]. He presented his reading to al-Kisa'i for critical approval and he was among his most prominent associates. He died in 240 A.H. (854 C.E.).[41] As for the transmitters who related his reading, the authorities are in disagreement about them.

As for Haf b. 'Umar al-Duri, his biographical data were provided above, with 'Asim's.

These, then, are the seven readers whose biographical information we mentioned, along with those who transmitted their readings. Al-Qasim b. Fira has worked their names, and the names of their transmitters, into his famous [orally transmitted] ode known as "al-Shatibiyya." As for the other three readers who complete the [group of] ten, they are Khalaf, Ya'qub, and Yazid b. al-Qa'qa'.

Khalaf b. Hisham al-Bazzar

We have given his [Khalaf's] biographical information in our treatment of Hamza. His reading was transmitted by Ishaq and Idris.

As for Ishaq, his full name, according to Ibn al-Jazari, was Ishaq b. Ibrahim b. 'Uthman Abu 'Abd Allah b. Ya'qub; [he was] originally from Marw, but he settled in Baghdad. [According to al-Dhahabi,] "He was Khalaf's copyist, and the one who transmitted and adopted his reading. He was regarded as reliable."[42] He died in 286 A.H. (899 C.E.).

As for those who studied the reading with him, the sources are in disagreement.

As for Idris, his full name, according to lbn al-Jazari, was Idris b. 'Abd al-Karim al-Haddad Abu al-Hasan al-Baghdadi. "He was a master in his field, an accurate recorder of readings, precise, and reliable. He studied with Khalaf b. Hisham." Al- Daraqutni was asked about him, and he said:

"Reliable, and more than reliable by a degree." He died in 292 A.H. (904 C.E.)[43]

As for those who transmitted the reading on his authority, the authorities are in disagreement.

Ya'qub b. lshaq

His full name was Ya'qub b. Ishaq b. Zayd b. 'Abd Allah Abu Muhammad al-Hadraml; [he was] a client of the Banu Hadram, and originally from Basra. According to lbn al-Jazari, he was one of the ten readers [of the Qur'an]. Ya'qub has provided the names of the teachers with whom he studied the reading. For a year and a half, he learned [it] from Salam, and then he presented it to Shihab b. Shanfara in five days. Shihab had received the reading from Maslama b. Muharib al-Muharbi in nine days; Maslama had learned it from Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali, who had received it from the Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him). Ya'qub died in the month of Dhii al-Hijjah, 205 A.H. (820 C.E.), at the age of eighty-eight.[44] Both Ahmad b. Hanbal and Abu Hatim regarded him as honest, and Ibn Hayyan has reckoned him among the reliable transmitters. However, according to lbn Sa'd, he was not regarded as definitively trustworthy by the scholars [of biographical dictionaries]. [45]

Two persons transmitted the reading from Ya'qub. They were Ruways and Ruh..

As for Ruways, his full name was Muhammad b. al-Mutawakkil Abu 'Abd Allah al-Lu'lu'i al-Basri. According to Ibn al-Jazari, he was a competent teacher of [Qur'anic reading and recitation], accurate and of great fame. He had acquired his reading by presenting it to Ya'qub al-Hadrami for critical confirmation. Al-Dani considers him one of the most intelligent of Ya'qub's associates. Muhammad b. Harun al-Tammar and the Imam Abu 'Abd Allah al-Zubayr b. Ahmad al-Zubayri al-Shafi'i acquired the reading from Ruways by presenting [reading aloud] it to him for critical confirmation. He died in the year 338 A.H. (949 C.E.).[46]

As for Ruh, his full name was Abu al-Hasan b. 'Abd al-Mu'min al-Hudhali. He was a client of Banu Hudhayl, and a grammarian who originated from Basra. lbn al-Jazari regarded him as a prominent teacher, reliable, a meticulous recorder [of the reading] and widely acknowledged [for this]. He presented his reading to Ya'qub al-Hadrami for confirmation, and was regarded as one of his most celebrated associates. He died in 235 or 234 A.H. (849 or 848 C.E.).[47]

As for those who presented their readings to him for confirmation, the authorities are in disagreement.

Yazid b. al-Qa'qa'

According to lbn al-Jazari, Yazid b. al-Qa'qa' was known as the Imam Abu Ja'far al- Makhzumi al-Madani al-Qari': "He was one of the ten readers [of the Qur'an] from the second generation of the Prophet's Companions, widely acknowledged and highly esteemed." He acquired the reading by presenting it to his master, 'Abd Allah b. 'Ayyash b. Abi Rabi'a, as well as to 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas and Abu Hurayra for critical approval. Yahya b. Mu'in states: "He was the leading authority in Qur'an reading among the people of

Medina. It was for this reason that he was named al-Qari'. He was reliable, but transmitted only a small number of traditions." lbn Abi Hatim asked his father about him and was answered, "He was of sound traditions."[48] He died in Medina in the year 130 A.H. (747 C.E.).

Yazid b. al-Qa'qa' had two transmitters of his reading: 'Isa and lbn Jammaz.

As for 'Isa, his full name was Abu al-Harith 'Isa b. Wardan al-Madani al-Hadhdha'. According to lbn al-Jazari, "He was a leading authority and skillful teacher of the reading, and an accurate reader [of the text of the Qur'an]." He presented his reading for critical approval to Yazid b. al-Qa'qa' and to Shayba, and later to Nafi'. Al-Dani regarded him as "one of the most prominent and the most senior among the associates of Nafi'. He was at times the link to Nafi' in the chain of transmission." [49] He died, as estimated on the basis of the sources, in the year 160 A.H. (777 C.E.).

As for those who presented the reading to him, the sources are in disagreement. As for lbn Jammaz, his full name was Sulayman b. Muslim b. Jammaz Abu al-Rabi' al-Zuhrr; [he was] the client of Banu Zuhra from Medina. According to lbn al- Jazari, he was a prominent teacher and an accurate reader of the Qur'an. He presented his reading to Yazid b. al-Qa'qa' and Shayba for critical approval, as is mentioned in the two books al-Kamil and al-Mustanir. Thereafter, according to al-Kamil, he presented it to Nafi'. He died, as is estimated on the basis of the sources, after the year 170 A.H. (786 C.E.). [50]

The transmitters of the ten Qur'an readers mentioned here are those known to the biographers. The readings transmitted by other chains are not accurately recorded. The biographers mention other transmitters of the ten readers but, as already pointed out, are in disagreement on them, so they are not mentioned here.

Notes

1. For the meaning of tawatur (uninterrupted transmission), see note 1 to the author's introduction.- Trans.

2. Muhammad 'Abd al-'Azim al-Zurqani, Manahil al- 'lrfan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, (1943]) vol. l, p. 433.

3. Ibid., p. 428.

4. Khabar al-wahid is a report based on a single narration, which goes back to a single narrator, and which, as such, does not attain the level of certainty of the tawatur transmission.-Trans.

5. Jalal al-Din 'Abd al-Rahiman al-Suyuti, Al-ltqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an, ed. Muhammad Abu al-Fadl Ibrahim, 3d ed., 4 vols. (Cairo: Dar al-Turath, 1985) vol. I , secs. 22-27, p. 217.

6. lbn Hajar Tahdhab al-Tahdhib, vol. 5, p. 274.

7. Shams al-Din Abu 'Abd Allah al-Dhahabi, Ma'rifat al-Qurra' al-Kibar 'ala al-Tabaqat wa al-A 'sar, 2 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assassat al-Risala, 1984) vol. 1, pp. 85-86

8. Ibid., pp. 195-98.

9. Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 11, pp. 52-54

10. Dhahabi, Tabaqat al-Qurra: vol. 1, pp. 198-201.

11. Ibid., pp. 86-88.

12. Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 5, p. 37.

13. Dhahabi, Tabaqat al-Qurra', vol. 1, pp. 173-74, 178.

14. Muhammad b. Ahtmad ibn al-Jazari, Al-Nashr fi al-Qira 'atal- 'Ashr,ed. 'Ali Muhammad al-Dabba', 2 vols. (Cairo: Al-Maktabat al-Tijariyyat al-Kubra, n.d.) vol. 1, p. 120.

15. Ahmad b. 'AIi ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, Lisan al-Mizan, 7 vols. (Hyderabad, India: Da'irat al-M'arif al-Nizamiyya, 1911-1912) vol. 1, p. 283.

16. Dhahabi, Tabaqat al-Qurra: vol. 1, p. 230.

17. Ibn Hajar, Lisan al-Mizan, vol. 5, p. 249.

18. Dhahabi, Tabaqat al-Qurra: vol. 1, pp. 88, 92

19. Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 5, p. 59.

20. Dhahabi, Tabaqat al-Qurra', vol. l, pp. 140-41.

21. Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 2, p. 401.

22. Dhahabi, Tabaqiit al-Qurra', vol. 1, p. 138.

23. Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib al-Tahdib, vol. 12, pp. 35-37

24. Dhahabi, Tabaqat al-Qurra', vol. 1, pp. 100-5.

25. Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 12, pp. 178-80

26. Dhahabi, Tabaqat al-Qurra ', vol. 1, pp. 151-52. 27. Ibid., pp. 191-92

27. Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 2, p. 408.

28. Dhahabi, Tabaqat al-Qurra', vol. 1, p. 193.

29. Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 4, p. 392.

30. Dhahabi, Tabaqat al-Qurra', vol. 1, pp. 111-15.

31. Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 3, p. 27.

32. Dhahabi, Tabaqat al-Qurra', vol. I., pp. 208-10. 34. Ibid., p. 210.

33. Ibid., pp. 107-11.

34. Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 10, p. 407

35. Dhahabi, Tabaqat al-Qurra', vol. 1, pp. 155-56.

36. Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 10, p. 407.

37. Dhahabi, Tabaqat al-Qurra', vol. 1, pp. 155-56.

38. Ibn Hajar, Lisan al-Mizan, vol. 4, p. 408.

39. Dhahabi, Tabaqat al-Qurra', vol. 1, pp. 152-55.

40. Ibid., pp. 121-22, 128.

41. Yaqut b. 'Abd Allah al-Hamawi al-Rumi, Mu'jam al-Udaba' al-Ma 'ruf bi-lrshad al-Arib ila Ma 'rifat al-Adib, ed. D. S. Margoliouth, 7 vols. (London: Luzac and Co., 1923) vol. 5, p. 185.

42. Dhahabi, Tabaqat al-Qurra', vol. 1, p. 105. 43. Ibid., p. 255.

43. Ibid. pp. 254-55

44. Ibid. pp. 157-58

45. Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 11, p. 382.

46. Dhahabi, Tabaqut al-Qurra', vol. 1, p. 216.

47. Ibid., p. 214.

48. Ibid., pp. 72-76.

49. Ibid., p. 111

50. Ibid. p. 315.

5. An Examination of the Readings

Synopsis: The uninterrupted transmission of the Qur'an is one of the necessities; the readings of the Qur'an are not transmitted uninterruptedly; statements by experts that the readings were not uninterruptedly transmitted; the seven harfs are not the seven readings of the Qur'an; the authoritativeness of the readings; the lawfulness of their recitation for daily worship.

At the beginning of chapter 4, we cited some opinions on whether or not the readings of the Qur'an have been transmitted by uninterrupted transmission (tawatur). We pointed out that those who investigated this matter have denied that the readings have been handed down by uninterrupted transmission, while, by contrast, Muslims are in agreement about the uninterrupted transmission of the Qur'an itself. We shall now proceed to discuss the rudiments that support the view we have adopted regard- ing the readings of the Qur'an-namely, that these readings have not been transmitted without interruption in every generation of their chains of transmission.

First, careful consideration of the transmitters themselves reveals with certainty that the readings have reached us through single narrations (akhbar al-ahad), the transmitters of which do not reach anywhere near the number that is required for the readings to be regarded as uninterrupted transmissions. Indeed, this is evident from what we included in the transmitters' biographies. How, then, could it be valid to claim conclusively that these readings have reached us through uninterrupted transmission? This is not to mention that some of these transmitters have neither been acknowledged nor confirmed as trustworthy.

Second, careful reflection on the ways in which the readers received their readings would lead us to conclude with certainty that these readings were undoubtedly transmitted to them through single narrations.

Third, the fact that the chains of transmission go back to the readers only, [not to the Prophet], disrupts the continuity of transmission even if the transmitters in each generation are beyond suspicion of connivance in a falsehood. The reason is that each reader was evidently transmitting his own reading [rather than one transmitted to him from the Prophet].

Fourth, the fact that each of these [ten readers], as well as their followers, produced arguments to prove the authenticity of their respective readings, and their rejection of readings [other than] their own is an absolute proof that the readings were based on the personal judgment of the reader and the opinions of those who followed him. Otherwise, had the readings been received without interruption from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), there would have been no need for proof and arguments confirming their validity.

Fifth, the rejection of a number of readings by a number of prominent scholars is itself a clear proof of the lack of continuity in the transmission of the readings, for, otherwise, such a rejection would be incorrect. Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, for example, rejects the reading of Ibn 'Amir and contests, in numerous places, some other readings among the seven. Others have challenged the readings of Hamza, Abu 'Amr, and Ibn Kathir. The scholars

have generally agreed on denying the status ofuninterrupted transmission to any reading which is not supported by one of the accepted levels of Arabic rhetoric, and have determined that some readers did indeed commit errors.[1] We have already mentioned in the biography of Hamza that his reading was rejected by the founder of the Hanbalite school of jurisprudence, Ahmad b. Hanbal, as well as by Yazid b. Hamn, lbn Muhdi,[2] Abu Bakr b. 'Ayyash, and lbn Durayd.

Al-Zarkashi, having adopted the view that the [accepted] readings are not open to choice, disagreed with a number of scholars, including al-Zamakhshari, who held that readings are [in fact] open to choice, and that this choice depends on the opinion of the masters of language and on the independent reasoning of the rhetoricians. Al-Zarkashi refutes the choice of Hamza where he read the word wa al-arhama ["the wombs," in verse 4:1] with the declension i[i.e., al-arhami], and then goes on to say:

Similarly, it has been reported that Abu Zayd, al-Ama'I, and Ya'qub al-Hadrami faulted Hamza for reading wa ma antum bi-musrikhiyya ["nor can you help me," in verse 14:22] with the genitive declension i over the stressed ending [i.e., musrikhiyyi]. They also criticized Abu 'Amr for contracting the letter ra into the letter lam in yaghfir lakum ["will forgive you," a recurrent phrase in the Qur'an: i.e., he read it as yaghfir-rakum, instead of yaghfir lakum]. "This," al-Zajjaj said, "is an atrocious error."[3]

Statements by the Scholars Who Deny the Uninterrupted Transmission of the Readings

To make this matter as clear as possible, it is appropriate to mention here [ten] excerpts of what has been said by authorities in this field who deny that the readings were transmitted without interruption.

1. lbn al-Jazan says:

Any reading that accords with one of the levels (wajh) of Arabic grammar,[4] and complies with one of the 'Uthmanic codices,[5] even if this were only a supposition,[6] and is supported by a sound chain of transmission, then it should be considered a sound reading, and may not be refuted, nor would it be lawful to repudiate it; rather, it should be regarded as one of the seven harfs,[7] according to which the Qur'an was revealed, and it is incumbent on people to accept it regardless of whether it is transmitted on the authority of the seven, or ten, leading readers [of the Qur'an] or any other acceptable prominent reader. However, when any [one] of these three criteria is not met, then such a reading must be designated as weak, rare, or invalid, regardless of whether it has been transmitted by one of the seven readers or someone even more prominent.

This opinion is correct and has been maintained by leading scholars of past and present generations. It has been explicitly stated by the leading traditionist Abu 'Amr 'Uthman al-Dani, and has been expressed more than once in writing by the religious scholar Abu Ahmad Makki b. Abi Talib and [by] Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad b. 'Ammar al- Mahdawi. The leading traditionist Abu al-Qasim 'Abd al-Rahman b. Isma'ti, known as Abu Shamma, has confirmed it as being the opinion of all the early scholars, of whom no one is known to have opposed it.

2. [Ibn al-Jazari continues]:

Abu Shamma writes in his book al-Murshid al-Wajiz: "One should not be deceived by every reading attributed to one of those leading [readers] and regard it as accurate and declare that it was thus revealed by God, except if it meets [the above mentioned] criteria. But if they [the readings] do not meet them, no compiler would be alone in transmitting them, nor would such a compiler limit himself to transmitting them from one of the seven, for their soundness would not be weakened if they were transmitted from someone other than the seven. The evaluation of a reading depends on how much it meets the above criteria, not on the person to whom it is ascribed. In the final analysis, all readings, whether attributed to the seven or others, are classified either as generally accepted or as rare. People feel greater confidence in the seven readers, however, because so much of their reading has been generally accepted as sound."[8]

3. Ibn al-Jazari says further:

With regard to this criterion [i.e., sound tradition], a contemporary scholar has stipu- lated that the transmission must be uninterrupted [from the Prophet's time], and he would not be content with a chain of transmission which is merely sound. He argues that the authenticity of the Qur'an is not established except through uninterrupted transmission, and that anything that has been transmitted through a single narration cannot be considered part of the Qur'an. The weakness of this argument is obvious, for if uninterrupted transmission were established, there would be no need for any of the other two criteria, like the text [of one of the 'Uthmanic codices]. This is because whatever variant is confirmed by uninterrupted transmission from the Prophet (peace be upon him) must be accepted definitively as part of the Qur'an regardless of whether it agrees with the 'Uthmanic codices or not. If we are to make uninterrupted transmission a condition in judging every instance of alternative recitation, most of the variant recitations preserved on the authority of those seven authorities and others would be disproved. Earlier, I was inclined toward this opinion; but subsequently, its weakness became obvious to me, it being better to agree with the opinion of past and present authorities.

4. [Ibn al-Jazari continues]:

The great scholar Abu Shamma writes in his book al-Murshid: "It has become well known among the contemporary teachers [of the Qur'an], and a group among the followers of the seven readings, that all of these readings have been transmitted from the seven readers without interruption, in chains of single authorities reporting successively from one another. Moreover, they maintain that it is incumbent to accept as conclusive that all of them have been revealed by God. We, too, believe in this, but only with regard to such of their readings on which there is a consensus among the chains of transmitters and the various religious groups, [these] having become widespread and well known without being refuted by anyone. This is the minimum condition for accepting a reading that has not been transmitted without interruption. [9]

5. Al-Suyuti writes:

The best person who expressed his opinion on this matter is the leading reader of his time, the teacher of our teachers, Abu al-Khayr b. al-Jazari. At the beginning of his book, al-Nashr, he writes: "Any reading that accords with one of the levels (wajh) of Arabic grammar and complies with one of the 'Uthmanic codices . . . then it should be considered a sound reading."

He goes on to quote in full the same passage we quoted above, then adds, "The imam Ibn al-Jazari was extremely well-versed in this matter." [10]

6. Abu Shamma writes in his book Kitab al-Basmala:

We are not one of those who insist on uninterrupted transmission for the words on which there is a difference of opinion among the readers; rather, all readings are based on uninterrupted as well as interrupted transmissions. This is clear to anyone who is fair and knowledgeable, and who has examined the readings and the chains of their transmission. [11]

7. Some other scholars, [according to Abli Shamma],

have mentioned that none of the leading scholars of legal theory (Usuliyyun) have stated that the readings have been transmitted uninterruptedly. On the other hand, there are those who maintain that investigations have shown that the seven readings have been uninterruptedly transmitted from those seven authorities; but it is questionable if the uninterrupted transmissions go back to the Prophet (peace be upon him). The chains of transmission going back to the seven readers can be found in the books of readings. They are chains of single narrators, reporting successively from one another. [12]

8. Some later authorities on the traditions have said:

Some scholars of legal theory (ahl al-usul) have claimed that each of the seven readings has been reported by uninterrupted transmission, and others have claimed that for all the ten readings. For this opinion there is no trace of research . . . . Moreover, a group of readers has reported that there is a consensus that each of the readings is based on uninterrupted transmission as well as on single narrations. No one in this latter group maintains that each one of the seven readings, let alone the ten, is entirely based on uninterrupted transmission. The latter view is the opinion of some legal theorists. However, the people most knowledgeable [about] a subject are the ones who practice it.[13]

9. In the course of discussing this subject, Makkr says, among other things:

Sometimes they [some legal theorists] defer to what 'Asim and Nafi' agreed upon, for the readings of these two authorities are the most preferable and have the soundest chains of authority, and the most eloquent Arabic style. [14]

10. Among those who have admitted the lack ofuninterrupted transmission in even the seven readings is the jurist-doctor Muhammad b. Sa'id al-'Iryan, in his annota- tions to [al-Rafi'i's I'jaz al-Qur'an], where he says:

None of the readings is free of incongruity; even the seven famous [ones] have much incongruity in them. [15] According to [some authorities], the soundest readings from the point of view of well-documented chains of

transmission are those of Nafi' and 'Aim; and the ones which strive for the highest level of eloquence are those of Abu 'Amr and al-Kisa'i. [16]

In the preceding, we have cited the minimal number of views necessary. We shall have the opportunity to cite more views later.

At this juncture let us ponder for a moment. After the testimony of all these promi- nent scholars about its absence, is there any value left to the claim regarding the uninterrupted transmission of the readings? In addition, is it possible to prove the uninterrupted transmission by following the opinion of an authority, that is, through taqlid (unquestioning adoption of ideas), and by accepting the lead of those who have merely conceded to somebody else's investigation without seeing evidence to that effect, more particularly in cases where the conscience refutes the claim to uninterrupted transmission? And even more astonishing than all of this is the ruling of the mufti of Andalusia, Abu Sa’id, that anyone who denied its uninterrupted transmis- sion had committed an act of disbelief (kufr)!

Assuming that, according to all concerned, the readings were transmitted without interruption, would someone who denies this be committing an act of disbelief, if [maintaining such a belief] is not one of the necessities of religion? Furthermore, assuming that, as a result of this presumed uninterruption in transmission, such a belief becomes a necessity of religion, then, would anyone denying it be committing an act of disbelief, even the one for whom this is not proven? O, my God, indeed, such a claim is nothing but insolence against You, and a transgression against Your boundaries, and a cause of division among the followers of Your religion!

The Evidence That Supports the Uninterrupted Transmission of the Readings

Those who maintain that the seven readings have been transmitted without interruption base their views on the following considerations.

First, [consider] the claim that there is a consensus of scholars from early times till the present on this opinion. The error of this claim has already been made clear to the reader. Add to this that a view accepted by one school of thought and rejected by others does not constitute a consensus. We shall elaborate on this [later], God willing.

Second, the importance paid to the Qur'an by the Companions of the Prophet and their Followers must have entailed the uninterrupted transmission of its reading. And this is evident to any fair-minded and just person.

The response to this is as follows. This argument actually establishes only the unin- terrupted transmission of the Qur'an itself, not the manner of reading it, especially since the readings of some of the readers are based on personal judgment (ijtihad) oron hearing (sama ') even from a single authority, as we have already pointed out. If this had not been so, the logical necessity of this argument would be to regard all readings as having been transmitted without interruption, and not just the seven or ten of them. We shall explain [later] that the confinement of the readings to the seven occurred in the third century of the hijra (emigration). Before this period, such an opinion had no existence or trace. The logical conclusion of this

view is that we should accept the uninterrupted transmission of all readings without any distinction among them, or reject it of all of them on the points where they disagree. Indisputably, the first proposition is invalid, and, therefore, the second proposition is established.

Third, if the seven readings have not been uninterruptedly transmitted, then the Qur'an cannot be regarded as uninterruptedly transmitted either. Since the concluding proposition is invalid, the antecedent is necessarily invalid. That which establishes this logical necessity is that the Qur'an reached us through those who memorized it as well as through the famous readers. Thus, the Qur'an is uninterruptedly transmitted only if their readings are uninterruptedly transmitted, otherwise not. Therefore, there is no escape from the opinion regarding the uninterrupted transmission of the readings themselves.

The response [to this is as follows].

1. [The argument about] the uninterrupted transmission of the Qur'an [from the Prophet himself] does not necessitate that the same be maintained about the readings, for the difference of opinion on the style of a word does not negate an agreement on its original state. It is for this reason that we find that the difference among the transmitters of some words in al Mutanabbi's poetry, for example, is not inconsistent with their being uninterruptedly transmitted from him, or with the fact that he composed them. Similarly, the variations in the particulars about the account of the Prophet's hijra does not in any way negate the fact that the reports about the hijra itself have been transmitted without interruption.

2. What has come down to us from the readers is [that there are] nuances in their readings. The actual Qur'an, however, has reached us [from the Prophet himself] through uninterrupted transmission among Muslims from generation to generation. Moreover, it was preserved through memorization in their hearts and through writing. The readers of the Qur'an had nothing to do with this [aspect of preservation] at all. It is for this reason that the uninterrupted transmission of the Qur'an is an established fact even if we assume that the seven, or ten, readers never existed. The greatness of the Qur'an is far too exalted to depend on that handful of individuals.

Fourth, if the readings are not to be regarded as uninterruptedly transmitted, then the same would apply to some terms of the Qur'an, like malik and malik. Consequently, accepting one of them, rather than the other, as the correct reading would be an unwarranted arbitrariness. This is the argument that was submitted by Ibn al-Hajib, and a group has subsequently followed him in this.

The response [to this is as follows].

1. According to this argument, one should rule that all the readings are uninterruptedly transmitted, and that to limit this to the seven would also be an unwarranted arbitrariness, especially since some readers other than the seven have been acknowledged as more important and reliable than the seven, as we shall note. Even if we concede that the seven readers were the most reliable and the most knowledgeable about the features of the readings, it does not follow that uninterrupted transmission is true only of their readings, to the exclusion of all others. Of course, in practice, this would

make their readings preferable to the others. Nevertheless, there is a vast difference between these two matters, and the view that all the readings are uninterruptedly transmitted is necessarily incorrect.

The differences in the reading, however, cause confusion between what is from the Qur'an and what is not, and make it difficult to differentiate them from the point of form and vocalization. This is not inconsistent with the uninterrupted transmission of the original Qur'an. The substance [of the Qur'an] remains uninterruptedly transmitted even if there are variations in its form or vocalization. One of the two or more forms [transmitted in the readings] is bound to be from the Qur'an, even if we do not know exactly which one.

Further Observations

The fact of the matter is that the uninterrupted transmission of the Qur'an does not necessitate the uninterrupted transmission of the readings as such. Al-Zurqani admitted this when he said:

Some people have exaggerated in their commendation of the seven readings, and have maintained that anyone who asserts that there is no need for uninterrupted transmission in them has committed an act of disbelief, since that entails that the whole Qur'an has not been transmitted without interruption. This view is ascribed to the mufti of Andalusia, al-Ustadh Abu Sa'id Faraj b. Lubb, who was unflinching in his opinion and wrote a lengthy treatise to support his belief and refute those who refuted him. However, his reasoning does not hold, for the opinion that the seven readings are not uninterruptedly transmitted does not entail the opinion that the Qur'an also is not transmitted uninterruptedly. Why should that follow, when there is such a big difference between the Qur'an and its seven readings that it could be true that the Qur'an has been transmitted without interruption through other readings than the seven, or [transmitted] to the extent that all the readers have agreed upon, or in as much as is accepted by a number of persons, whether readers or not readers, large enough to ensure that they are not conniving in a falsehood. [17]

Some others have maintained that the uninterrupted transmission of the Qur'an [from the Prophet] does not necessitate that the readings have been transmitted without interruption. Indeed, none of the leading scholars of legal theory (usliyyun) have arrived at the conclusion that the readings are uninterruptedly transmitted, and that the uninterrupted transmission of the Qur'an depends on its readings being transmitted without interruption, as maintained by Ibn al-Hajib.[18] According to Al-Zarkashi, in his book al-Burhan, "The Qur'an and the readings [of the Qur'an] are two entirely different realities. The Qur'an is the divine revelation to Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny), intended to serve as an elucidation [of divine guidance] and a miracle [as evidence of the prophethood of Muhammad]. [In contrast], the readings are the differences in the modes of the words of this revelation, whether shortened or doubled and so on. The seven readings are regarded by the majority as uninterruptedly transmitted, but some maintain that they [the seven] are only the most acceptable." Al-Zarkashi also says:

Investigation establishes that these readings are uninterruptedly transmitted from the seven authoritative readers. However, as for their being uninterruptedly transmitted from the Prophet, there is reason for doubt in this. The chains of transmission of these seven readings are recorded in the books of readings; they are chains of single authorities reporting successively from one another. [19]

The Readings and the Seven harfs

It may be imagined that the seven harfs in which the Qur'an was revealed are the seven readings, and this, in tum, may be used to prove that the seven readings are part of the Qur'an. It is therefore necessary to point out the fallacy of such an inference, and that it is something that has not occurred to any of the investigating scholars. In that, we shall concede [here] the authenticity of these traditions, without contesting them in any measure, small or great. We shall discuss them [later] from the point of view of their authenticity.

First, we shall quote al-Jaza'iri's statement on this subject:

The seven readings were not held in greater esteem than any other reading until the time when the Imam Abu Bakr Ahmad b. Musa b. al-'Abbas b. Mujahid, in the year 300 A.H. (912 C.E.), undertook the task of gathering them in Baghdad. Thus he collected the seven readings of the best-known authorities of Mekka and Medina, Iraq and Persia, and Syria. These were: Nafi', 'Abd Allah b. Kathir, Abu 'Amr b. al-A'la, 'Abd Allah b. 'Amir, 'Aim, Hamza, and 'Ali al-Kisa'i. Some people are under the delusion that the seven readings are the seven harfs, but that is not the case. . . . A number of scholars have blamed lbn Mujahid for his choice of the number seven, for the confusion that it could cause. . . . Ahmad b. 'Ammar al-Mahdawi says: "By making them seven in number, he (Ibn Mujahid) did something which he should not have done. He obscured the matter for the commonality by suggesting to those with little insight that these seven readings are the seven harfs related in the tradition. If only he had made the number less or more than seven, he would have removed this obscurity.[20]

AI-Ustadh Isma'il b. Ibrahim b. Muhammad al-Qurab writes in his book al-Shafi:

Adherence to the seven readings of the [well-known] readers at the exclusion of others is without precedent or support in the prophetic tradition (sunna). The seven readings were brought together by a later reader of the Qur'an who had not learned more than the seven readings. He compiled a book and named it The Book of the Seven [Readings]. This, subsequently, spread among the commonality. [21]

The Imam Abu Muhammad Makki writes:

Some scholars have mentioned more than seventy leading [readers of the Qur'an] who were held in higher esteem and prominence than those seven. . . . Consequently, how can it be permissible to assume abou t those late seven scholars that each of their readings represents each of the seven harfs that [is] mentioned in the traditions? Indeed, this is a gross misunderstanding [lit., "backwardness"]! Was this on the basis of the Prophet's clear instructions [as reported in the tradition], or what else was it? How could that be allowed when al-Kisa'i was added to the seven only

yesterday, during the reign of al-Ma'mun and other [Abbasids]. The seventh used to be Ya'qub al-Hadrami, but in the year 300 or thereabouts, Ibn Mujahid substituted al-Kisa'i for him.[22]

Al-Sharaf al-Mursi writes:

Many among the common people have imagined that seven hiarfs mean the seven read- ings [of the Qur'an]. This is a gross ignorance.[23]

Al-Qurtubi writes:

A large number of our scholars, such as al-Dawudi, Ibn Abi Sufra, and others, have said that these seven readings that are attributed to those seven readers are not the seven styles (harfs) which the Companions [of the Prophet] had at their disposal to recite. They, rather, all go back to one of the seven styles, on the basis of which 'Uthman codified the Qur'an. This has been mentioned by Ibn al-Nahhas and others. On the other hand, these famous readings are the ones that are selected by those leaders of the readers. [24]

Ibn al-Jazari undertook to put an end to the error of those who assert that the seven harfs are the ones in which the Qur'an was revealed and which continue till the present day. He says:

You can gauge [the weakness of] this opinion. Surely, the famous readings today, whether seven, ten, or thirteen, are few in number and not more than a drop in the ocean in comparison to the readings well known during the early period. Those who are well informed know with certainty that the readers who received their readings from those seven, and many others besides them, were far more numerous than accounted for; and those who received their readings from this latter group v.ere even greater in number, and so on in every generation. This continued until the third century, when the differences between the readings became too great and efforts at precision too little. The learning of the Book [of God] and the sunna (prophetic tradition) was the most widespread branch of learning in that period, and some leading scholars undertook to record the readings from those who were transmitting them. The first respected authority to collect the readings in a book was Abu 'Ubayd al-Qasim b. Sallam (d. 224 A.H./838 C.E.), who included, I think, twenty-five readers in addition to those seven. Following him, AHmad b. Jubayr b. MuHammad al-Kufi (d. 258 A.H./871 C.E.), who had settled in Antioch, compiled a book consisting of five readings, one from each major Islamic city. After him, al-Qadi lsma'il b. Ishaq al-Maliki (d. 282 A.H./895 C.E.), Qalun's associate, wrote a book on readings in which he assembled the readings of twenty leading authorities [on the subject], among whom were included those seven. Thereafter, the great scholar Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jafar al-Tabari (d. 310 A.H./922 C.E.) compiled a book entitled al-Jami' , in which he assembled more than twenty readings. A little after al-Tabari, Abu Bakr Muhammad b. Ahmad b. 'Umar al-Dajuni (d. 324 A.H./935 C.E.) compiled a book on the readings, in which he included Abu Ja'far al-Tabari as one of the ten readers. Following him, Abu Bakr Ahmad b. Musa b. al-'Abbas b. Mujahid (d. 324 A.H./935 C.E.) was the first person [to write a book] limiting the readings to those seven, basing his report only on the authority of al-Dajuni and Abu Ja'far al-Tabari.[25]

Ibn al-Jazari goes on to mention a group of scholars who wrote about the readings:

We have lengthened this section because it has been reported to us that according to some persons who do not have [enough] knowledge, the authentic readings are these seven; or, that the seven harfs, to which the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) alludes, are these seven [readings]. The majority of ignorant persons believe that the correct readings are the ones mentioned in the two books al-Shafibiyya and al-Taysir, and that it was to this that the Prophet alluded when he said: "The Qur'an has been revealed in seven harfs." Some of them go as far as to regard any reading not mentioned in these two books as noncanonical. Moreover, many among these persons regard any reading derived from any other source than these seven as noncanonical, whereas it is possible that many of the readings that are not in al-Shafibiyya and al-Taysir, or among the seven readings, are more accurate than many of those that are. Undoubtedly, what led them to this dubious opinion is that they heard the tradition which says, "The Qur'an was revealed in seven harfs," and also heard about the seven readings, and thus conjectured that these seven are the ones intended by [the traditions]. It was for this reason that many early scholars disapproved of Ibn Mujahid's limiting the readers to the seven, and found fault with him in this matter. [This latter group] says, "He should have made their number less or more than seven, or, alternatively, made his intention [of choosing seven] clear in doing so, so that those who are not well informed would be spared this confusion."[26]

Ibn al-Jazan goes on to cite the opinions of lbn 'Ammar al-Mahdawi and Abu Muhammad Makki, which we cited above.

Abu Shamma writes:

A group of people have conjectured that the seven readings existing at present [i.e., contemporary to Abu Shamma] are the ones intended by the tradition [about the seven harfs], but this contradicts the consensus of learned scholars, and is assumed only by some ignorant people."[27]

These citations make it perfectly clear that the readings are not uninterruptedly transmitted, neither from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) nor from the readers themselves, regardless of their being seven or more. Even if we were to concede that they were transmitted from the readers without interruption, they certainly could not be held as [having been] transmitted uninterruptedly from the Prophet himself. This is because they were either transmitted through single narrations or adopted through the personal decisions of the readers themselves. At this point, it is necessary to discuss two matters that arise from this conclusion.

The Authoritativeness of the Readings

A group of scholars has maintained that these readings are authoritative in the sense that it is permissible to cite them in formulating a legal judgment pertaining to the Shari'a. Thus, for instance, the prohibition [of] sexual intercourse with a woman in menstruation, who has become clean but has not performed the ritual bath, was de- duced on the basis of chapter 2, verse 222, as the scholars of Kufa, with the exception of Hafs, read it as,

"And do not approach them until they have cleansed themselves [yaffaharna]"- with the stressed ta.[28]

In response, the truth of the matter is that these readings are not authoritative, and, hence, they cannot be cited in the formulation of legal decisions. What proves this is that each of these readers is open to the possibility of error; nor is there any rational or textual justification to follow any reader among them, in particular. Independent reason suggests, and sacred law forbids, following any source other than certain knowledge. We shall elaborate on this point [later].

It is likely that one might say that even if the readings are not uninterruptedly transmitted, they still are transmitted on the authority of the Prophet. Accordingly, they are included in the category of definitive forms of evidence that establish the authoritativeness of the single narration (khabar al-waid). And once they are included in this category, to then use them as documentary evidence is no longer subject to establishing an opinion on the basis of conjecture, through a general recourse to these readings (wurud), or by using them as a basis for legal arbitration (ukuma), or for having recourse to any particular one of them (takhsis) for judgment.

The response to this is as follows.

First, it is not evident that the readings have been established through transmission in order for them to be admitted as one of these forms of evidence [in deriving a legal decision]. They were very possibly established through the personal judgments of the readers themselves. This possibility is supported by the statements of the leading scholars, presented above, and is further enforced if we take into consideration that the disagreement of the readers over the reading of the Qur'an was due to the absence of diacritical points and vocalization marks in the codices that were sent to the provinces.[29]

Ibn Abi Hashim, according to al-Jaza'iri, says:

The cause of the differences in the seven readings and others besides them was that the regions to which the 'Uthmanic codices were sent had in them Companions from whom the people of those regions had received the reading of the Qur'an. Since the codices lacked diacritical points and vocalization marks, the people in each region, says Ibn Abi Hashim, continued to recite it as they had heard it from the Companions, as long as it agreed with the written text of the Qur'an. And, that which disagreed with the written text was abandoned. It was, consequently, from here that the differences arose between the readers of the different regions.[30]

Al-Zarqani writes:

The scholars of the early period of Islam regarded the pointing and vocalization of the Qur'an as reprehensible because of their extreme concern to preserve the recital of the Qur'an in the way it was transcribed in the 'Uthmanic codices, and because of the fear that introducing [the diacritical points and vocalization] would lead to changes in it.

. . . However, as you know, times have changed and the Muslims were forced to add diacritical points and vocalize the Qur'an for this very same reason-that is, to ensure that it was recited in exactly the way it was

transcribed, and because of the fear that the lack of diacritical points and vocalization would lead to changes in it.[31]

Second, not all the transmitters of these readings are of established reliability, and for this reason, they do not have the authoritativeness of trustworthy narrators. This has been shown in our biographical sketches of the readers and their transmitters. Third, even if we concede that all the readings are based on oral transmission [and not on the personal judgment of the readers], and that all their narrators are known to be reliable, it remains that we generally know that parts of these readings could never have originated from the Prophet. It is evident that such knowledge should make us aware of contradictions among these transmissions, so that each of them would be a repudiation of the other. Consequently, all of them forfeit their claim to authoritativeness. To ascribe greater validity to some of them would entail giving them preponderance without [having them] rest on a preponderant [argument]. It is therefore necessary to fall back on the probabilities arising from these contradictions. Without this method, it is not permissible to formulate legal decisions on the basis of any of these readings.

This conclusion is to be inferred even if we concede that the readings were transmitted from the Prophet without interruption. Thus, if it can be said that any two different readings were transmitted from the Prophet without interruption, then both of them would have to be from the Qur'an as revealed by God. They would not differ from the point of view of the source of the transmission, but from that of their meaning. When we know, in general, that one of the two apparent senses [of the reading] is not what is, in reality, intended, then there is no choice but to abandon both of them and fall back on the principle of literal or practical sense. The reason is that the proofs based on the [principles of] preponderance or optionality are entirely conjectural and include none that come from an authoritative source. We have discussed this matter at length in one of our published lectures on the science of usul, entitled "The Principles of Islamic Law," under the section "Resolution and Contrariety and the Preponderance" [in the selection of contradictory evidence].

The Permissibility of the Recitation [of the Readings] in Prayer

The majority of Sunni and Shi'ite scholars have maintained the permissibility of reciting the Qur'an in the ritual prayers in any of the seven readings. In fact, a consensus has been claimed on this matter by many of them. Some have even permitted recitation according to any of the ten readings. Still others maintain that it is permissible to recite the Qur'an in any reading that conforms with one of the levels of Arabic,[32] and that agrees with one of the 'Uthmanic codices-even if it [happens to] be on probability-and whose chain of transmission is sound. Accordingly, they do not limit them to any specific number.

The truth of the matter is that what is required by the first condition is the impermissibility of reciting any reading in the daily prayers that is not proven to have come from the Noble Prophet (peace be upon him and his

progeny) or from one of his legatees, the Infallible Ones (peace be upon them). The reason is that what is obligatory in the prayers is the recitation of the Qur'an. It is therefore not sufficient to recite something which is not of the Qur'an. Reason has independently deduced the necessity of obtaining something definitively certain to follow the knowledge of having worked to meet one's obligation. Hence, the only way to ensure complete compliance in the manner of performing the prayer is to repeat it after reciting from each different reading, or, at least, to repeat the variations in a single prayer. Consequently, in reciting the Fatiha (Opening Sura), one would have to combine the two variant readings maalik and malik. As for the complete sura that is required to be recited following the Fatiha, it would be incumbent, on the basis of the clearer evidence in this connection, to either choose a sura for which there are no variant readings, or combine the variant readings as explained above.

But from the standpoint of instructions-that have been proven authentic-[in which] the infallible Imams [told] to their readers to adopt any reading that was well known in their time, it doubtless follows that a single reading is sufficient for the prayer. Indeed, the various readings were well known during the lifetime of the Imams, and it has not been reported that they prohibited any of them. Had there been any prohibition, it would have reached us through uninterrupted transmission, or, at least, through a single transmission. On the contrary, it has been related, on their authority, that they had approved these readings through their declaration: "Read as the people [in general] do. Recite as you have been taught."[33] Accordingly, there is no sense in limiting the permission to the seven or ten readings. Yes, the permission must take into consideration that the reading should not be rare, and established by a transmission that is regarded as untrustworthy by Sunni authorities, nor should it be invented. As for rare readings, an example is to say, Malaka yawma al-din (He owned the day of judgment), with the verb malaka (owned) in the past tense and yawm (day) in the objective case.[34] As for invented readings, an example is, Innama. yakhshini Allahu min 'ibadihi al- 'ulama.'a (God fears among His bondsmen only the learned), with the word Allah (God) in the subjective case and 'ulama' (learned men) in the objective,[35] in accordance with the reading of al-Khuza'i, who reported it on the authority of Abu Hanifa.

The essence of all this is that it is permissible to recite in the daily prayer any reading that was well established during the lifetime of ahl al-bayt [i.e., the infallible Imams of the Prophet's family] (peace be upon them all).

Notes

1. Al-Mu'taim bil-Lah Tahir b. Salih b. Ahmad al-Jaza'iri, Al-Tibyan (Cairo: Al-Manar, 1915) p. 106

2. Ibn Muhdi's full name is 'Abd al-Rahman b. Muhdi. lbn Hajar al-'Asqalani reports that Ahmad b. Sinan said that he heard 'Ali b. al-Madani say, "'Abd al-Rahman b. Muhdi was the most learned person." He said this repeatedly. According to al-Khalili, "He was a leader without a contender." Al-Shafi'I said, "I do not know an equal to him in the whole world." See Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 6, p. 280

3. Jaza'iri, Tibyan, p. 87.

4. By this, lbn al-Jazari means, as he later explains, that the reading must fully accord with Arabic grammar on one of the following levels: the very eloquent, the eloquent, the generally accepted, and, finally, the level on which there is an inconsequential disagreement. See Ibn al-Jazad, Al-Nashr, vol. l, p. 10.-Trans.

5. Ibn Al-Jazari, here, has in mind the slight discrepancies of wording in the 'Uthmanic codices. See ibid., p. 1 1.-Trans

6. Ibn Al-Jazari is allowing here for the possibility that the reader of the Qur'an may follow one of the 'Uthmanic codices on hearsay, not having seen it himself. See ibid, p. I I.-Trans.

7. For a discussion of this controversial term, see chapter 6. Lexically, the word if means the extremity of a thing, its border, margin, brink, side, edge. Thus, it is sometimes taken to signify a style or manner or way of doing a thing. (Cf. Qur'an 22: 11, "And among mankind is he who worships God upon a narrow marge (harf) so that if good befalls him, he is content there-with, but if a trial befalls him, he falls away utterly.") Alternatively, the word means a letter of the alphabet, or a whole word, and thus could sometimes signify a dialect-Trans.

8. Ibn al-Jazari, Al-Nashr, vol. 1, pp. 9-10

9. Ibid., p. 13

10. Suyuti, Al-Itqan, vol. 1, pp. 210-15 sec. 22-27

11. Jaza'iri, Tibyan, p. 102

12. Ibid., p. 105

13. Ibid., p. 106

14. Ibid., p. 106

15. Muhammad Sa'id al-'Iryan, in Rafi'i, I'jaz al-Qur'an, p. 52, n. l

16. Ibid., p. 53, n. 2

17. Zurqani, Manahil al- 'Irfan, p. 428.

18. Jaza'iri, Tibyan, p. 105

19. Suyuti, Al-Itqan, secs. 22-27, vol. 1, p. 215.

20. Jaza'iri, Tibyan, p. 103.

21. The author cites al-Shafi as quoted by Jaza'iri, Tibyan, p. 82

22. Jaza'iri, Tibyan, p. 82

23. Ibid., p. 61.

24. Qurtubi, Jami' , vol. 1, p. 46.

25. Ibn al-Jazari, Al-Nashr, vol. I , pp. 33-37.

26. Ibn al-Jazari, Al-Nashr, vol. 1, pp. 33-37.

27. Suyuti, al-Itqan, secs. 22-27, vol. 1, p. 223.

28. The established reading is yathurna: "until they are clean from menses" (i.e., when the menstruation period is over).- Trans.

29. The system of diacritical points and vocalization marks that are essential to the legibility of Arabic script was not developed till much later in the century.-Trans.

30. Jaza'iri, Tibyan p. 86.

31. Zurqani, Manahil al- 'Irfan, p. 402.

32. See note 4.-Trans.

33. Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 11, pp. 71, 74

34. Chap. 1, verse 3 of the Qur'an. The correct reading is maliki yawmi al-din (owner of the day of judgment).- Trans.

35. Chap. 35, verse 28. The correct reading is innama yakhsha Allaha min 'ibadihi al-'ulama'u (the learned among His bondsmen fear God alone).-Trans.

6. Was the Qur'an Revealed according to Seven Harfs?

Synopsis: Presentation of the traditions about the revelation of the Qur'an according to seven harfs; a refutation of these traditions; the lack of any reference to a rational meaning of the revelation of the Qur'an in seven hiarfs; the ten interpretations men- tioned for the seven hiarfs; explanation of the incorrectness of these interpretations.

It has been narrated in the traditions of the Sunnis that the Qur'an was revealed in seven harfs.[1] It is appropriate to present these traditions first and then undertake the investigation [of them].

1. Al-Tabari relates a tradition on the authority of Yunus and Abu Kurayb, who reported from a chain of transmission that goes back to Ibn Shihab, whose chain of transmission had gone back to Ibn 'Abbas, who had said that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said: "Gabriel recited to me the Qur'an in one harf. I asked him to repeat it, and continued to ask him for more until he ultimately recited it in seven harfs."[2]

Muslim relates this tradition on the authority of Hurmalah, who related it from Ibn Wahb, who had related it from Yunus.[3] Al-Bukhari relates it through another chain of transmission,[4] and also relates its content from Ibn al-Barqi, whose chain of transmission goes back to Ibn 'Abbas.

2. Al-Tabari also relates on the authority of Abu Kurayb, whose chain of transmission goes back to 'Abd al-Rahman b. Abi Layla, who had reported from his grandfather, who had reported from Ubayy b. Ka'b, who had said:

I was in the mosque when a man came in to pray. He recited the Qur'an with a reading which I disapproved of him using. Then another man entered and recited in a way different from that of his fellow worshiper. So we all went to the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny). I said: "O Messenger of God, this person recited in a reading which I disapprove of him using. Then came this fellow and recited with a reading that was different from that of his fellow worshiper." The Prophet commanded both of them to recite, and approved both readings. This threw in my heart a doubt the like of which I did not feel since accepting the faith. When the Prophet saw what had overcome me, he struck my breast, and I began to perspire as if I were contemplating God in great fear. Then he said to me, "O Ubayy, it was conveyed to me to recite the Qur'an in one harf " I replied, requesting him [the angel] to make things easier for my community. He came to me a second time and told me to recite the Qur'an in one harf [5] Again, I requested him to make things easier for my community. He returned a third time and told me to recite it in seven harfs and [added that] "for each repetition [of God's command] you may ask something of Me." Thus, I said, "O my God, forgive my community! O my God, forgive my community." And I delayed the third request for the day when all creatures, including Abraham (peace be upon him), would ask for my intercession.

This tradition is also reported by Muslim, with only a slight variation.[6] Al-Tabari also relates it, with very little difference, on the authority of Abu Kurayb, through another chain of transmission. He also relates a variant on the authority of Yunus b. 'Abd al-A'la and Muhammad b. 'Abd al-A'la al-

.San'ani, who had reported from a chain of transmission going back to Ubayy.

3. Tabari relates on the authority of Abu Kurayb, who reported from a chain of transmission going back to Sulayman b. Surad, who had reported from Ubayy b. Ka'b, who had said:

I went to the mosque and heard a man reciting. I asked him, "Who taught you this recitation?" He said, "The Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny)." I took him to the Prophet and said, "Ask this man to recite." The man recited and the Prophet said, "Well done!" I said, "But you taught me to read like this and like that"(giving him examples). The Prophet said, "Well done to you as well!" I said, "You have approved both recitations!" He struck me on my chest with his hand and prayed, "O, God, take away doubt from Ubayy!" I began to perspire and was filled with great fear. Then he said: "The two angels came to me. One of them said, 'Recite the Qur'an in one harf ' The other said, 'Increase it for him,' and I said, 'Increase it for me.' [At that] he said, 'Recite it in two harfs.' This went on until the number reached seven. Thus, he said, 'Recite it in seven harfs."'

4. Al-Tabari relates on the authority of Abu Kurayb, whose chain of transmission goes back to 'Abd al-Rahman b. Abi Bakra, who reported from his father, who had said:

The Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said: "Gabriel said, 'Recite the Qur'an in one harf ' Michael said, 'Ask him to increase.' Gabriel said, [Recite] 'in two harfs.' [This went on] the number reached six or seven harfs"-this doubt [about the number] is on the part of Abu Kurayb. "Then he (Gabriel) said: 'All these [harfs] are clear and sufficient as long as no verse about punishment ends in mercy, nor a verse about mercy in punishment. It is as if one were to say halumma instead of ta’ala'" [both meaning "Come!"].[7]

5. Al-Tabari relates on the authority of Ahmad b. Mansur, whose chain of transmission goes back to 'Abd Allah b. AbI Talha, who reported from his father, who had reported from his grandfather, who had said:

A man recited [the Qur'an] to 'Umar b. al-Khattab, and 'Umar altered his reading for him. The man said, "I recited it to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), and he did not alter it for me." Both argued in the presence of the Prophet. The man asked, "O Messenger of God, did you not teach me to recite the verse in such and such a manner?" The Prophet said, "Yes." Something occurred in 'Umar's mind and the Prophet perceived it in his face. He struck his chest and said, "Drive away the satan." He repeated this thrice, and then added, "O 'Umar, the Qur'an is all the same, as long as you do not turn mercy into punishment and punishment into mercy."

Al-Tabari also relates on the authority of Yunus b. 'Abd al-A'la, whose chain of transmission goes back to 'Umar b. al-Khattab, an incident similar to the one reported above involving 'Umar and Hisham b. Hakim. Al-Bukhari, Muslim, and al-Tirmidhi also relate the story of 'Umar and Hisham, but with another chain of transmission, and variations in the wording of the tradition.[8]

6. Al-Tabari relates on the authority of Muhammad b. al-Muthanna, whose chain of transmission goes back to lbn AbI Layla, who reported on the authority of Ubayy b. Ka'b, who said:

He said that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) was at the watering place of Banu Ghaffar when Gabriel came to him and said, "God has commanded you to teach your community the Qur'an in one harf." He (the Prophet) said, "Ask God for His forgiveness and mercy and [tell Him] that my community cannot bear this." Then Gabriel came again to him and said, "God has commanded you to teach the Qur'an to your community in two harfs." The Prophet replied, "Ask God for His forgiveness and mercy and [tell Him] that my community cannot bear this." Then Gabriel came a third time and said, "God commands you to teach the Qur'an to your community in three harfs." The Prophet said, "Ask God for His forgiveness and mercy and [tell Him] that my community cannot bear this." Then Gabriel came the fourth time and said, "God commands you to teach your community to read the Qur'an in seven harfs." In whichever harf they read, they would have recited correctly.

This tradition is also related by Muslim in his Sahih[9] Al-Tabari relates something to this effect from lbn Kurayb, too, whose chain of transmission goes back to Ibn Abi Layla, who reported from Ubayy b. Ka'b. He also relates part of the tradition, with slight variations, on the authority of Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Tusi, whose chain of transmission goes back to lbn Abi Layla, who reported from Ubayy b. Ka'b. As well, he relates it on the authority of Muhammad b. al-Muthanna, whose chain of transmission reaches [back to] Ubayy b. Ka'b.

7. Al-Tabari also relates on the authority of Abu Kurayb, whose chain of transmis- sion goes back to Zarr, who reported from Ubayy b. Ka'b, who had said:

The Messenger of God met Gabriel at a place called Ahjar al-Mara'. He said, "I have been sent to a community of unlettered people (ummiyyun), among whom are youths and servants, old men and women." Gabriel said, "In that case, teach them the Qur'an in seven harfs."[10]

8. Al-Tabari also relates on the authority of 'Amr b. 'Uthman al-'Uthmani, whose chain of transmission goes back to al-Maqbari, and from him to Abu Hurayra, who said:

The Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said: "Indeed, this Qur'an has been revealed in seven harfs. Hence, read it [in any one harf] and there is no objection [in so doing]. However, do not wind up a mention of mercy with that of punishment, nor a mention of punishment with that of mercy."

9. Al-Tabari also relates on the authority of 'Ubayd b. Asbat, whose chain of transmission goes back to Abu Salma, and from him to Abu Hurayra, who said:

The Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny) said, "The Qur'an was revealed in seven harfs [that indicate God is] The All-Knowing, the All-Wise, the All- Forgiving, the All-Merciful."

Al-Tabari relates a similar tradition on the authority of Abu Kurayb, whose chain of transmission goes back to Abu Salma, and from him to Abu Hurayra.

10. Al-Tabari [relates] from Sa'id b. Yahiya, with his chain of transmission going back to 'Aim, and from him to Zarr, and to 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud, who said:

We were debating about a sura of the Qur'an, whether it had thirty-five or thirty-six verses. Consequently, we went to the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny), and found him engaged in conversation with 'All. We told him that we had disputed the reading. The Prophet's face became red [with anger] and he said, "Surely, those before you perished only because of their disagreement." Then he whispered something to 'Ali, who told us: "The Messenger of God commands you to recite the way you were taught."

11. Al-Qurtubi relates the following tradition on the authority of Abu Dawud, who reported from Ubayy, who had said:

The Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny) said: "O, Ubayy, I used to recite the Qur'an. I was asked whether [to recite it] in one harf or two. The angel who was with me said, 'Say, in two.' Then I was asked, 'In two or three harfs?' The angel who was with me said, 'Say, in three.' [This went on] until the number reached seven. Then he said, 'Any of these (seven harfs] is comprehensive and sufficient. Thus, you can say, [God is] the All-Hearing, Knowing, Mighty, and Wise, as long as you do not confuse a verse about punishment with one about mercy, and vice versa."' [11]

These are the most important traditions on this subject, all of them [being] related through Sunni channels. They contradict the sound tradition reported by Zurara on the authority of Abu Ja'far [the Imam Muhammad al-Baqir] (peace be upon him). He said:

The Qur'an is one, revealed by the One. However, the differences are caused by the transmitters [of the readings] [12]

Al-Fudayl b. Yasar said to Abu 'Abd Allah [the Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq] (peace be upon him), "People are saying that the Qur'an was revealed in sevenl harfs." The Imam said: "They lie, those enemies of God. Undoubtedly, it was revealed in one harf from the One Being." [13]

We already stated briefly that the points of reference in matters of religion, after the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), are the Book of God and the Family of the Prophet (ahl al-bayt), from whom God removed all impurities, [thereby] purifying them thoroughly, as they ought to be. A detailed treatment of this subject shall follow after this, God willing. There is no value to the traditions when these contradict those [traditions] that are proven sound. It is for this reason that it is not important to discuss the chains of transmission of these reports, for [contradicting the sayings of the Imams] is the first thing that makes a tradition fall short of being reliable and authoritative [evidence in deriving legal decisions on its basis]. Add to this the disagreement and inconsistency among them, and the incongruity in some of them between the questions and the answers.

The Incoherence of the Traditions

Among the inconsistencies is that some of the traditions indicate that Gabriel taught the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) one harf of reading, and that the Prophet asked him to increase the harfs, and the angel did so, till the number of the harfs reached seven. This indicates that the increase was gradual. But in some traditions, the increase occurs all at once in the third instance; in others, God commanded the Prophet in the third instance to recite in three harfs, and the command to recite it in seven harfs was in the fourth instance.

Among the contradictions is that some traditions indicate that all the increases [to seven harfs] were made in one instance, and that the Prophet's request for the increase was on Michael's advice. Thus, Gabriel increased it until the number reached seven. Other traditions indicate that Gabriel left and returned each time [to receive God's response to the Prophet's request].

Another inconsistency is that some traditions narrate that Ubayy entered the mosque and saw a person reciting [in a version] contrary to his reading. In other narratives, he was in the mosque when two persons entered and recited the Qur'an [in a version] contrary to his reading. There is contradiction as well in what the Prophet said to Ubayy, and so on.

An example of the incongruity between the questions and the answers occurs in the tradition [related] by Ibn Mas'ud, where 'Ali (peace be upon him) reportedly said, "The Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny) commands you to recite the way you were taught." This response has no connection with the subject of the argument regarding the dispute over the number of verses. In addition to all that, the tradition does not refer to the seven harfs in any rational sense, nor does it afford the observer any accurate understanding of the expression "seven harfs."

The Interpretations of the Seven Harfs

A number of interpretations have been given to explain the revelation of the Qur'an in seven harfs. We will refer to the important ones, discuss them, and demonstrate their incorrectness.

The Approximation Interpretation

[First], the expression "seven harfs" refers to different words that are close in meaning, such as 'ajjil, asri ', and is 'a (all meaning "move quickly"). These harfs remained in circulation until the caliphate of 'Othman, who reduced them to one harf and ordered all other texts based on the remaining six to be destroyed. This interpretation was adopted by al-Tabari,[14] and by others. According to al-Qurtubi, this opinion was [indeed] adopted by the majority of scholars,[15] and so did Abu 'Amr b. 'Abd al-Barr say this.[16] They supported their argument on the traditions related by Ibn Abi Bakra, Abu Dawud, and others mentioned above, as well as on a tradition reported by Yunus on the authority of lbn Shihab, who said:

Sa'id b. al-Musayyab informed me about the person who is mentioned by God in the verse, "And we know very well that . . . they say: 'Only a mortal teaches him' (Qur’an 16:103)." He [this person] was infatuated by the fact that he was engaged in writing down the revelation. The Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny) used to dictate to him [the words] sami 'un 'alim or 'azizun Hakim, or something to that effect, used as verse

endings. Then the Messenger, being under [the influence of the] revelation, would be distracted from him. The man would sometimes inquire from the Messenger of God, saying, "Is it 'azizun Hakim or sami'un 'alim or 'azizun 'alim?" The Messenger would say to him, "Whichever you write is all right." He was infatuated by this. Thus, he used to say, "Muhammad has entrusted [the writing of the revelation] to me, and I write what I wish."

They also drew their conclusion from Anas's reading of Qur’an 73:6, as follows: Inna nashi 'atal-layli hiya ashaddu wat'an wa aswaba qilan [instead of wa aqwama qilan].[17] Someone said to him, "O Abu Hamza, the word in the verse is aqwama." He said, "Aqwama, awaba, or ahda are all the same."[18] They also drew their conclusion from lbn Mas'ud's reading of Qur’an 36:29: Inna kanat illi zaqiyyatan [instead of shayatan] wahidatan;[19] and from a tradition reported by al-Tabari from Muhammad b. Bashshar and Abu al-Sa'ib, whose chain of transmission goes back to Humam. According to this tradition, Abu al-Darda' was teaching a man how to read Inna shajarata al-zaqqumi ta amu al-athimi [The tree of Zaqqum is the food of the sinner (Qur’an 44:43-44)]. But the man, again and again, read it as Inna shajarata al-zaqqumi ta 'amu al-yatimi [The tree of Zaqqum is the food of the orphan]. After unsuccessfully making the man repeat the verse, Abu al-Darda' realized that he did not understand the difference between athim (sinner) and yatimi (orphan) regarding the closeness between them. So he taught him: Inna shajarata al-zaqqumi ta 'amu al-fajiri [The tree of zaqqum is the food of the wicked].[20]

Moreover, they also made their inference from the traditions, cited above, that indicate how far one can go in facilitating the reading: "As long as no verse about punishment ends in mercy, nor a verse of mercy in punishment." The limits set down in this injunction serve no purpose except if the reference to the seven harfs is intended as a permission to substitute some words for others. Consequently, an exception was made in that a verse about punishment may not be concluded with mercy, nor a verse about mercy with punishment. According to these traditions-and once the concise traditions which deal with the seven letters have been referred back to the traditions which deal with the matter at length and make it clear-we have no choice but to understand those traditions in the sense explained above.

However, all the meanings that have been suggested for this expression are extra- neous to the object of these traditions, as we shall indicate; therefore, we must discard the traditions because abiding by their contents is impossible. There are several reasons for that.

First, the above interpretation of the seven harfs is applicable only in some places in the Qur'an where it is possible to refer to seven synonymous words. But, inevitably, it does not apply to most of the Qur'an. Then, how does one conceive of these seven harfs in which the Qur'an is said to have been revealed?

Second, if this interpretation means that the Prophet (peace be upon him) permitted the replacement of words in the existing Qur'an with other words close in meaning, as stated in some of the traditions, then the very possibility of making such a change would undermine the Qur'an, which is a timeless miracle and an irrefutable proof for all people. A rational person

would surely know that this would cause people to renounce the revealed Qur'an and fail to heed it. Is it possible for any reasonable person to imagine that the Prophet would permit the reader to recite, Yasin wa al- dhikri al-azim innaka la-mina al-anbiya 'just to please those who regard such a thing as permissible? However, this is nothing more than a false accusation. Indeed, God, the Exalted, says:

Say [O Muhammad]: It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I only follow that which is revealed to me (Qur’an 10:15).

If [indeed] it is not for the Prophet to change it of his own accord, how could that be possible for others? The Prophet had taught Barra' b. 'Azib a prayer in which there was the phrase wa nabiyyuka al-ladhi arsalta. Barra' read it as wa rasuluka al-ladhi arsalta.[21] The Prophet ordered him not to write the word al-rasul (messenger) in place of al-nabi (prophet).[22]If this was the case with a prayer, then how would it be with the Qur'an? If, however, the purport of the above interpretation is that the Prophet recited the Qur'an according to the seven harfs, as maintained by the numerous traditions cited above, then the one who maintains such an opinion should point out these seven harfs in which the Prophet recited the Qur'an, for God, the Exalted, has promised to preserve what He has revealed:

Lo! We, even We, reveal the Reminder, and lo! We verily are its Guardian (Qur’an 15:9).

Third, the above mentioned traditions have related that the purpose of revealing the Qur'an in seven harfs was to make it easier for the Muslim community, because they could not recite according to one dialect. This was what impelled the Prophet to pray God asking Him to increase the number of dialects to seven. Yet we have seen that the differences in readings led some Muslims into mutual accusations of disbelief, until 'Uthman restricted the reading to one harf, and destroyed all the other texts.

Certain conclusions may be derived from the above discussion.

1. The dispute over the readings of the Qur'an was a curse on the Muslim community, whose effects became evident during the caliphate of 'Othman. Accordingly, how could it be true that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) had asked God for something which would cause corruption in the community? And how could it be true that God granted such a request? Many traditions report that the Prophet admonished against disagreement, warning that it would lead to the destruction of the community. Some traditions relate that the Prophet's face changed, and became red with anger, when he was told about the dispute over the reading. Some of these traditions have already been mentioned and others will be cited here.

2. The above mentioned traditions include a statement to the effect that the Prophet said that the Muslim community will not be able to "read [the Qur'an] in one harf " This is a clear falsehood, which cannot conceivably be attributed to the Prophet, for we find that the community, after 'Uthman, in spite of its different races and languages, was able to read the Qur'an in one way. Consequently, how could it be difficult for it to agree on one way during the lifetime of the Prophet, when the community was made up of people who spoke pure Arabic?

3. The dispute that compelled 'Uthman to confine the reading to one style also occurred during the Prophet's lifetime, and the Prophet confirmed each reader in his reading, and ordered the Muslims to accept them all, informing them that this represented the mercy of God on them. How, then, could it be permissible for 'Uthman and those after him to close the gate of divine mercy in spite of the Prophet's order to allow people to read the Qur'an? How could it be permissible for Muslims to reject the Prophet's opinion and accept 'Uthman's and endorse his action [in this regard]? Did they find him more merciful to the community than its Prophet? Or did they find him more aware of something about which the Prophet (God forbid!) was ignorant? Or did the revelation come down on 'Uthman to abrogate these harfs?

In short, this opinion is so appalling that it does not deserve the effort of refuting it, and this was the basic factor that caused later Sunni scholars to reject it. It is for this reason that some of them, such as Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Sa'dan al-Nahawi and al-Hafiz'Jalal al-Din Suyuti, have resorted to the view that these reports [about the seven harfs] belong to the category of ambiguous traditions, whose purport is unknown.[23] They say this despite the fact that, as the reader has seen, their purport is clear and no one who reflects on them can doubt that, because the majority of scholars have spoken of them and followed them.

The Seven Gates

In the second interpretation, the term "seven harfs" is intended to mean the seven [heavenly] gates (al-abwab al-sab'a) from which the Qur'an came down. These deal with verses about prohibition (jazr) and command (amr), what is lawful and unlawful, what is clear and ambiguous, and parables.

This explanation has been argued on the basis of a tradition related by Yunus, whose chain of transmission goes back to Ibn Mas'ud, who reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny). He [Ibn Mas'ud] said:

The first [heavenly] book came down from one gate and in one harf. The Qur'an came down from seven gates and in seven harfs, which deal with prohibition and command, what is lawful and unlawful, what is clear and ambiguous, and parables. Thus, allow what it makes lawful, proscribe what it makes unlawful, do what you have been commanded, avoid what has been prohibited, be warned by its parables, act according to its clear verses, and believe in its ambiguous verses and say, "We believe therein; the whole is from our Lord" [Qur'an 3:7].[24]

This view can be refuted as follows.

1. According to the literal meaning of the tradition, the seven harfs in which the Qur'an was revealed are not the same as the seven gates from which it came down. It is therefore incorrect to explain the former by the latter, the way those who support this view have [explained it].

2. The tradition itself is contradicted by one reported by Abu Kurayb, whose chain of transmission goes back to Ibn Mas'ud, who said, "God revealed the Qur'an in five harfs: [These deal with the] lawful and unlawful, [the] clear and ambiguous, and [the] parables. [25]

3. The tradition is muddled in its purport, because "forbidding" (jazr) and "unlawful" (haram) have the same connotation. Consequently, the gates do not add up to seven. On the other hand, there are matters covered by the Qur'an that are not included in these seven gates, such as the genesis and the return to God, accounts of past communities, the arguments of the Qur'an, the forms of learning, and so on. If those who maintain this explanation intend to include all these subjects under the [categories of] clear and ambiguous verses, then they should also include all the other gates under them, and divide the Qur'an into two harfs only-the clear and the ambiguous-because all that is in the Qur'an can be classified under these two categories.

4. The notion that the subjects of the Qur'an are divided according to seven harfs does not accord with the contents of the previously cited traditions that speak about making matters easy for [people in] the Muslim community because they were not able to read according to one harf.

5. Some of the previously cited traditions clearly state that the seven harfs are the styles on which the readers differed. This last tradition, assuming that its inference is correct, does not support any explanation that differs from it.

Another Meaning of the Seven Gates

According to [a third] interpretation, the seven harfs deal with command, prohibition, persuasion, threat, disputation, stories of bygone communities, and parables. This explanation is supported on the tradition related by Muhammad b. Bashshar, whose chain of transmission goes back to Abu Qallaba, who said:

It has been related to me that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said, "The Qur'an is revealed in seven harfs [dealing with verses about] command and prohibition, persuasion and intimidation, argumentation, stories of past communities, and parables." [26]

The argument against this view may be inferred from our argument against the second view [cited] above.

The Eloquent Dialects

According to [the fourth] interpretation, the seven harfs are the eloquent dialects of Arabic. These dialects are interwoven in the Qur'an. Hence, parts of it are in the dialect of the Quraysh; others are in the dialects of the Hudhayl, Hawazan, al-Yaman, Kinana, Tamim, and Thaqif. This view has been attributed to a group of scholars, among whom are al-BayhaqI, al-AbharI, and the author of al-Qamus [al-Fayruzabadi].

The response [to this is as follows].

1. The above mentioned traditions have determined the purport of the expression "seven harfs." Accordingly, it is not possible to ascribe to it such meanings that do not conform to its original sense.

2. To ascribe the meaning "dialects" to the harfs contradicts what has been related on the authority of 'Umar, who said, 'The Qur'an was revealed in the Mudar dialect."[27] According to this tradition, 'Umar disapproved of Ibn Mas'ud's reading [in which he said], 'atta hin, instead of hatta hin (till a time), and wrote him that "the Qur'an was not revealed in the dialect of the

Hudhayl; hence, teach it to people in the dialect of the Quraysh and not that of the Hudhayl."[28]

Furthermore, it has been related that 'Uthman said to the three tribes of the three clans of the Quraysh, "If you and Zayd b. Thabit dispute over something in the Qur'an, then write it in the dialect of the Quraysh, because it was revealed in their dialect."[29]

Another tradition reports that "a dispute arose between 'Umar and Hisham b. Hakim concerning a reading in "Surat al-Furqan" (sura 25). Hisham recited it in one way, and the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said, 'This is the way it was revealed.' Then 'Umar recited it in another way, and the Prophet [again] said, 'This is the way it was revealed.' Then the Messenger of God added, 'This Qur'an has been revealed in seven harfs.'"[30]

Both 'Umar and Hisham belonged to the Quraysh; therefore, there was no cause for them to disagree at that time over the reading of the Qur'an. In addition to all this, to ascribe the meaning of "dialects" to the harfs has no scientific basis and is merely a judgment without proof.

3. If those who maintain this opinion mean to say that the Qur'an includes idioms from other dialects that the Quraysh dialect did not have, then this explanation runs against those traditions that say the purpose of revealing the Qur'an in seven harfs was to make it easier for the Muslim community [to recite]. In fact, it runs against the truth-namely, the fact that the dialect of the Quraysh predominated over all other Arabic dialects. It [the Qur'an] assimilated the most eloquent words of each dialect, and for that reason it deserved the status of being the standard for measuring the Arabic language and for applying the rules of its grammar. However, if they mean to say that the Qur'an includes other dialects, but that they are interwoven with the dialect of the Quraysh, then there would be no reason for limiting them to seven dialects, because the Qur'an con- tains nearly fifty dialects. [Indeed], according to a tradition reported on the authority of Abu Bakr al-Wasiti: "In the Qur'an there are fifty dialects. Those include the dialects of the Quraysh, Hudhayl, Kinana, Khazraj, Ash'ar, Namir. . . ."[31]

The Mudar Dialect

According to [the fifth] interpretation,[32] the seven harfs refer to the seven dialects of the Mudar tribes, in particular. These dialects are interwoven in the Qur'an, and they arc the dialects of the Quraysh, Asad, Kinana, Hudhayl, Tamim, Dubba, and Qays. This explanation is refuted by everything we said above against the fourth explanation.

The Differences in the Readings

[The sixth] interpretation regards the seven harfs as the categories of differences in the readings. Some of those who maintain this opinion have said, "We reflected on the categories of differences in the readings and found that they are seven" [in number]. In one of them, the differences are in vocalization, while the meaning and form are the same. For instance, [the verse] wa hunna utharu lakum [Qur’an 11:78-"They are purer for you"], uses utharu instead of atharu.

In another category, the differences are over form and meaning, arising from dif- ferences in desinential inflection. For example, Rabbana ba 'id bayna asfarina [Qur'an 34: 19]-Our Lord, make the stage between our journeys longer] has been read in the imperative [as here] as well as in the past tense [i.e., ba'ad (made), instead of ba'id (make)].

In the third category, the forms are the same but the meanings differ as a result of using different letters: for example, nunshizuha, with the letter za, and nunshiruha, with the letter ra.[33]

In the fourth category, the forms are different but the meanings are the same. Thus, for instance, kal-'ihni Tal-manfush [Qur'an 101:5-like colored corded wool] was also read as kal- sufi al-manfosh [like corded wool].

In the fifth, both the form and meaning are different. For example, talhin mandud [Qur'an 56:29-clustered plantains] has also been read as tal'in mandud [ranged clusters]. In the sixth category, the order of the words in the phrase is different. For example, "And the agony of death comes in truth" [Qur'an 50: 19] has been read as "and the agony of truth comes with death."

In the seventh category, the difference consists of the addition and omission of words. For instance, "My brother has ninety-nine ewes" [Qur'an 38:23] has been read as "ninety-nine she-ewes"; and, "As for the lad, his parents were believers" [Qur'an 18:80] has been read as "As for the lad, he was a disbeliever and his parents were believers"; and, "Then after their compulsion, God will be forgiving, merciful" [Qur'an 24:33] has been read as "After their compulsion, to them God will be forgiving, merciful."

The above opinion may be refuted as follows.

1. There is no evidence to support this view. This is particularly so because those addressed in these traditions were unaware of these differences.

2. Among the above mentioned categories of differences, there are those which are defined on the basis of whether the difference in reading leads to a difference in meaning, or whether it does not. Itis obvious that the occurrences or non occurrences of a change of meaning do not in themselves necessitate a division into two points. This is because the conditions of the actual word and its reading do not change. In fact, ascribing a difference to the actual word in this sense is similar to describing a thing by the condition of its object. Hence, the different readings of talhin mandid and kal- 'ihni al-manfush [categories five and four] can be classified as one category.

3. Among the categories of differences mentioned above, there are those which are defined on the basis of whether the difference leads to a change of form, or whether it does not. Here again, it is evident that this is not cause for separate classification. The reason is that retaining the form pertains to the way the word is written, not to the way it is recited. The Qur'an is the name given to the recitation, not to the script form and not to its written version; and the revelation was in the spoken word, not in writing. Consequently, the variant readings of talh and nunshizuha [categories five and three] are to be classified in one category, not two.

4. The traditions cited above state explicitly that the Qur'an was initially revealed in one harf. It is evident that the intention here is not to convey that

this one harf constitutes one of the above mentioned variants. How, then, could it be possible to infer that the seven refer to them collectively?

5. Most of the Qur'an is a source of agreement among the readers, not of disagreement. Accordingly, if we add the parts on which they are in agreement to the categories of their disagreement, they add up to the number of eight. This means, [according to the above argument], that the Qur'an was revealed in eight harfs.

6. The ultimate point of the traditions quoted earlier in this chapter is that the disagreement over the readers was in fact over specific words. This was mentioned in the story about 'Umar and others. According to the preceding discussion, this disagreement forms one of the seven harfs. In resolving their dispute, the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) did not need to offer the excuse that the Qur'an was revealed in seven harfs. Is it [even] possible to attribute the coming down of Gabriel with one harf, then two harfs, then three, and, finally seven, to these [word] differences? Indeed, al-Jaza'iri states it very fairly when he says: "There are many opinions in this matter, and most of them are far from accurate." It would appear that those who maintained these opinions had overlooked the content of the tradition that says that the Qur'an was revealed according to seven harfs, and that therefore, they [the readers] said what they said.[34]

Variation in the Readings in Another Sense

According to [the seventh] interpretation, the seven harfs are the points of difference in the readings, but in a different sense than discussed so far. Al-Zurqani adopted this opinion and has related it, on the authority of Abu al-Fadl al-Razi, in his book al-Lawa'ih:

The points of difference do not exceed the seven harfs. First, there are differences in nouns, whether they are singular, dual, or plural, or whether they are masculine or feminine. Second, there are differences in the conjugation of the verbs, whether they are in past, present, or imperative forms. Third, there are differences pertaining to the aspects of desinential inflection (i'rab). Fourth, there are differences regarding omission and addition [of words]. Fifth, there are differences pertaining to the position of the words in the verse. Sixth, there are differences caused by phonetic change. Seventh, there are differences of accent among the different dialects, such as opening, softening, emphasizing, articulating the consonants, or contracting a letter into another, and so on.

The refutation [of this point of view is as follows].

In our discussion of the sixth interpretation, we dealt with the problems of classifying the first, the fourth, and the fifth differences [cited by al-Zurqani]. In addition, the differences in nouns and verbs share the characteristic of involving variations in forms; hence, there is no sense in categorizing them separately. If we take into account the particulars of this classification, then it becomes necessary to regard each difference in structure-in regard to its being in the dual, plural, masculine, feminine, past, present, or imperative [forms]-as forming a separate category. In addition to that, differences in the pronunciation of the same word, involving contracting a letter into another or articulating it, or slurring a vowel or slightly articulating it, or softening a consonant or strengthening it, do not

prevent it from being the same word. Ibn Qutayba, according to al-Zurqani, has already made this point.[35]

The truth of the matter is that the points of disagreement on the readings are six in number:

First, a difference might occur in the pronunciation of the word, which does not affect its substance, such as a disagreement on whether the word b.a.'.d (to separate) should be read in the past tense [ba 'ada] or in the imperative [ba'id], or on whether the word amanatihim [36] (pledge) is in the plural or the singular.

Second, a difference might occur in the meaning of the word, which does not af- fect its form, such as a disagreement over the word nunshizuha- whether it is written with the letter ra or a zayn.

Third, a difference might occur in the meaning and form of the word, such as the disagreement over whether the word [in Qur'an 70:9 and Qur'an 101:5] is al- 'ihni or al-saif (colored wool or wool).

Fourth, a difference in the form of a word might arise from a disagreement over its desinential inflection, such as the difference in reading the word arjulakum (accusative case) or arjulikum (genitive case).

Fifth, a difference might occur in the position of a word in the sentence, such as the examples that have been cited above.

Sixth, a difference might occur in the addition or omission of words, as shown in the examples above.

Single-Digit Plurality

According to this [eighth] opinion, the word seven [in the traditions] refers to a plurality of single digits [and not necessarily to the number seven only], just as the words seventy and seven hundred refer, respectively, to two- and three-digit pluralities. This opinion has been attributed to al-Qadi 'Ayyad and those who followed him.

The response [to this is as follows]. This opinion is contrary to the apparent meaning of the traditions. In fact, it is contrary to the explicit meaning of some of them. Moreover, this cannot be regarded as an independent view distinct from other interpretations, because it does not determine the meaning of the word flaif s in the traditions. This is necessary. Obviously, it accepts one of the meanings mentioned above; hence, it is refuted as they have been.

The Seven Readings

One of the meanings suggested for the seven harfs under discussion is that which involves seven different readings of the Qur'an.

The response [to this is as follows]. If these seven readings are intended [to mean] the famous seven readings, then we have already explained to the reader [in chapter 5] the baselessness of this probability. However, if the seven harfs are intended to absolutely mean the seven readings, then it is evident that the number of readings is more than one. On the other hand, it is impossible to interpret this view as meaning that the utmost number of possible variants of every word in the Qur'an is seven. For, if it is intended that the majority of the words in the Qur'an can be read in seven different ways, then such a view is invalid, because the words that can be read in

seven different ways are very few indeed. And if it is intended that this condition is present in some words and by way of partial confirmation, then it is obvious that some of the Qur'an's words can be read in more than seven ways. The expression wa 'abd al-taghut [Qur’an 5:60-who serves idols], for example, was read in twenty-two different ways, and the word uffin [Qur’an 17:23, 21:67, 46: 17-fie] in more than thirty ways. Furthermore, this opinion does not agree with the terms of the traditions [cited above], and most of the other views on this matter are like it in that respect.

The Different Dialects

According to [the tenth] interpretation, the seven harfs refer to the different accents with which a single word may be pronounced. This view was adopted by al-Rafi'i in his book Ijaz al Qur’an.[37]

Al-Rafi'i maintains that each community among the Arabs had a particular way of pronouncing certain words. For this reason, we find that the Arabs differ in the way they pronounce the same word, in accordance with their different accents. Thus, for example, an Iraqi changes the letter qaf in the word yaqulu to the Persian qaf, whereas a Syrian changes it to the glottal stop a. The Qur'an was revealed in all these dialects to make it easier for the Muslim community [comprised of all these different communities], because limiting it to one particular dialect among these many dialects would have caused difficulty for other tribes that were not familiar with that particular dialect. Hence, the term seven is a figurative reference to the pronunciation that each group considers the most correct way. Accordingly, it does not matter if the actual number of accents in Arabic is more than seven.

The response [to this is as follows]. This interpretation, although, relatively, the best among those so far considered, is also incomplete.

1. It contradicts what has been related on the authority of 'Umar and 'Uthman: that the Qur'an was revealed in the dialect of the Quraysh, and that 'Umar prevented lbn Mas'ud from reading 'atta hin.

2. It also contradicts 'Umar's disagreement with Hisham b. Hakim over the reading, although both were from the Quraysh.

3. Moreover, it contradicts the occasions of the traditions, and in some cases their explicit statement, which maintains that the difference [in the readings] was in the actual words, not in the way they were pronounced, and that these were the harfs in which the Qur'an was revealed.

4. The word seven, as this interpretation explains it, is different from the apparent sense of the traditions and, in some cases, their explicit statements.

5. The corollary of this opinion is that it is permissible to use the different dialects in reciting the Qur'an. This is certainly against the absolute practice of all Muslims. It is not possible to claim the abrogation of the permission to read in the one desig- nated dialect, because such an opinion is baseless. Nor is it possible for those who maintain such a view to argue for the abrogation on the basis of a definite consensus on the issue, because the consensus is, rather, on the absence of definite proof that the Qur'an was revealed according to different dialects. In addition, if it is hypothetically agreed that such a thing is established, as maintained by those who subscribe to this opinion, how can a consensus be reached in this matter and,

more so, in view of the fact that the Prophet insisted that the Qur'an [was revealed] in seven hiarfs to make matters easy for the Muslim community. How can it be possible that this should be confined to the short period after the revelation of the Qur'an, and how can it be correct that a consensus or any other proof was established to that effect? More important, it is evident that the Muslim community was even more in need of a respite in the later period because those who adhered to Islam in the earlier period were few indeed. Thus, it was possible for them to agree on a single dialect for reading the Qur'an. This was unlike the situation of the Muslims in subsequent periods [who were far more numerous]. We shall limit our discussion to the views already cited, for they make it unnecessary to mention the rest and refute them.

In conclusion, the notion that the Qur'an was revealed in seven harfs cannot be explained satisfactorily. Consequently, it is necessary to reject the traditions supporting such a view, especially since the traditions of the Imams Muhammad al-Baqir and Ja'far al-Sadiq have proved their falsity, and have established that the Qur'an was revealed in one harf, and that the differences originate with the transmitters [of the text of the Qur'an].

Notes

1. For the lexical meaning of this term, see chapter 5, note 7.-Trans.

2. This tradition and traditions 2 to 10, cited below, are all related in Tabari, Tafsir, pp. 22-24, 39-50. Tradition 11 is related in Qurtubi, Tafsir, vol. 1, p. 43

3. Muslim b. Hajjaj al-Qushayri, al-Jami' al-Sahih, 8 vols. (Dar al-Khilafat al-'Aliyya [Istanbul]: Al-Matba'at al-'Amira, 1911-12) vol. 2, p. 202

4. Bukhari, Sahih, vol. 6, pp. 481-82

5. Cited in Tabari, Tafsir; but in Muslim, Sahih, vol. 2., p. 203, it is "two harfs."

6. Muslim, Sahih, vol. 2, p. 203

7. This last sentence means that the difference in the dialectical recitations is a difference of words, not of meaning, just as halumma and ta ala mean the same thing.-Trans.

8. Muslim, Sahih, vol. 2, p. 202; Bukhari, Sahih vol. 3, p. 90; vol. 6, p. 482; vol. 8, pp. 53, 215; and Muhammad b. 'Isa al-Tirmidhi, Sunan al-Tirmidhi wa Huwa al-Jami' al-Sahih, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhab 'Abd al-Latif, 3d ed., 5 vols. (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr, 1978) vol. 4, pp. 263-64.

9. Muslim, Sabhih;, vol. 2, p. 203

10. Quoted in Tirmidhi, Sunan, vol. 4, p. 263

11. Qurtubi, Jami ', vol. 1, p. 43

12. Kulayni, Al-Kafi, tradition no. 12, cited in vol. 1 1, pp. 64-65

13. Ibid., tradition no. 13, p. 66

14. Tabari, Tafsir, vol. 1, pp. 48-50

15. Qurtubi, Tafsir, vol. 1, p. 42

16. Jaza'iri, Tibyan, p. 39

17. "The vigil of the night is [a time] when an impression is more keen and speech more certain."-Trans.

18. The three words could be used interchangeably to mean "certain," "accurate," "correct."-Trans

19. Both words (zaqiyyatan and sayhatan), mean "a shout."-Trans

20. Tabari, Tafsir, vol. 25, p. 78.

21. "And Your prophet, whom You sent." Al-Barra' substituted "messenger" for "prophet."- Trans

22. Jaza'iri, Tibyan, p. 58

23. Ibid., p. 61
24. Tabari , Tafsir, vol. 1, p. 68
25. Ibid., p. 69
26. Ibid., p. 69
27. Jaza'iri, Tibyan, p. 64.
28. Ibid., p. 65
29. Bukhari, Sahih;, p. 475
30. I cited this tradition above
31. Suyuti, al-Itqan, vol. 2, sec. 37, p. 102.
32. The Mudar is the conglomeration of tribes to which the Quraysh, the Prophet's tribe, belonged .-Trans
33. Nunshizuha (to adjust or arrange it) occurs in Qur’an 2:259. Nunshizuha means "to spread it out." The letters za and ra are similar in appearance, distinguished only by a dot over the Arabic za. Dotting was introduced into Arabic script at a later date.-Trans.
34. Jaza'iri, Tibyan, p. 59.
35. Zurqani, Manahil al- 'Irfan, p. 154
36. This word occurs in Qur’an 23:8 and Qur’an 70:32 and is spelled, in both cases, consonantly, i.e., am.n.tihim. Hence, while there could be no doubt that the second vowel is a full vowel, the third could be read as a full vowel (amaniitihim; hence the plural) or as an accented vowel (singular: amanatihim).- Trans
37. Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafi'i, I'jaz al-Qur'an wa al-Balagha al-Nabawiyya (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1973) pp. 67-68.

7. The Protection of the Qur'an from Alteration

Synopsis: Alterations to the meaning of the Qur'an that Muslims are in agreement about; alterations that did not occur in the Qur'an, and on which Muslims are in agreement about; alterations that occurred, and on which there is disagreement; declarations of the major Imamite figures regarding the absence of alteration, this being part of their religious beliefs; abrogation of the recitation-a well-known doctrine among Sunni scholars; utterances of the prominent Companions of the Prophet about the occurrence of alteration; the belief in the abrogation of a recitation is tantamount to the belief in alteration; five proofs against the [presence of] alteration; specious arguments of those maintaining a belief in alteration.

Before embarking upon the main topic here, it is appropriate to begin the treatment of the subject with certain matters that have relevance to the purpose of this study, and without which this discussion cannot proceed.

The Meaning of Alteration

The word tahrif is applied, and carries a number of meanings, by way of concurrence. Some types of alteration were made to the Qur'an and were agreed upon by the Muslims; other types of alteration did not occur, as Muslims also agreed. Still others are the subject of dispute among them. Let us now turn to the details.

First, the word tahrif has the sense of "transferring a word from its original sense to another, and transforming its meaning into another." Such is the meaning derived from the following verse of the Qur'an:

"Some of those who are Jews change (yuharrijfuna) from their context [in the Scripture]" (Qur’an 4:46).

There is no dispute among Muslims about whether this kind of alteration occurred in the Book of God. Thus, anyone who explains the Qur'an incorrectly, ascribing to it meanings other than those it conveys, has committed an alteration. One can find many followers of the sinful deviations and corrupt doctrines, who have changed the meaning of the Qur'an by interpreting its verses in accordance with their own opinions and their heretic tendencies.

There are prophetic statements prohibiting such alteration of the meanings, and the doer of these alterations has been condemned in a number of traditions. Among these traditions is the one reported by al-Kulayni, whose chain of transmission goes back to the Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (peace be upon him), who wrote in his letter to Sa'd al-Khayr:

Among their ways of repudiating the Book [of God] is that they stand by its wording, whereas they misconstrue its limits. Hence, they see it but do not submit to it. And the ignorant ones are pleased with their memorization of the text, while the learned are grieved by their leaving obedience to it.[1]

Second, the word tahrif has also the sense of "an omission or addition in the letters or the vocalization [of a word], while the Qur'an remains preserved [in its meanings] and without loss [of any part], even if [the altered words] were not distinct from others."

Alteration in this sense definitely occurred in the Qur'an. Earlier in this book, we demonstrated that the readings of the Qur'an have reached us

through an uninterrupted transmission. This means that the revealed Qur'an accords with only one of the [ten preserved] readings, while the rest contain additions or omissions.

Third, the word tahrif is used in the sense of "the omission or addition of a word or two, while the revealed Qur'an remains preserved [in its meanings]."

Alteration in this sense occurred in the early days of Islam, and definitely during the period of the Companions. The evidence of this is the consensus among Muslims that 'Uthman ordered his governors to bum all the codices except the one codex that was collected under his orders. This shows that these [destroyed] texts were different from the one that was officially compiled; otherwise, there was no justification to destroy them. Some scholars have recorded the instances that had occasioned differences among these codices. One of them was 'Abd Allah b. Abi Dawud al-Sijistani, who named his work Kitab al-Masahif (The Book of the Codices [of the Qur'an]). Thus, there is no doubt that alterations were made either by 'Uthman or by the scribes of the destroyed codices. However, we shall explain that what was compiled under 'Uthman was the Qur'an that is now known among Muslims, which had passed to them, successively, from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), hand to hand. The addition and omission had occurred in those other codices that were discontinued after 'Uthman's reign. As for this existing Qur'an, there is no addition or omission in it.

In short, for those who maintain that the transmission of those other codices has stopped-which is actually the case-tahrif in this third sense did occur in the early days of Islam, but it certainly ended during the reign of 'Uthman, and the text was restricted to the one whose uninterrupted transmission from the Prophet was estab- lished. As for those who maintain that all the codices continued to be transmitted without interruption, they have to accept the corollary that alteration in the sense that Muslims arc not in agreement upon would have occurred in the revealed Qur'an, and that part of it is lost. We noted the statements of al-Tabari and other scholars regarding 'Uthman's abolition of the six other harf in which the Qur'an was revealed, and restricting it to only one.[2]

Fourth, tahrif occurs in the sense of "addition or omission in a verse or a sura, while the revealed Qur'an remains preserved"; and it is accepted that the Prophet had recited these.

Alteration in this sense also definitely occurred in the Qur'an. For example, one of the things on which Muslims are agreed is that the Prophet recited the basmala [the verse that reads, "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent"] before each sura except the ninth, entitled "al-Tawba." Sunni scholars, however, are in a disagreement on whether this sentence is part of the Qur'an. A group of them opted for the view that it is not part of the Qur'an; in fact, the followers of the Maliki school of jurisprudence go as far as regarding it as reprehensible to recite it before the Surat al-Fatiha (Opening Sura) in the obligatory daily prayers, except if the worshiper determines it to be outside the dispute; on the other hand, others among the Sunnis consider the bismalla to be part of the Qur'an.

As for the Shiites, they have accepted the bismalla as part of each sura except sura nine, "al-Tawba". Some Sunni scholars have adopted this as the sound opinion. We shall treat the matter in detail when we begin our commentary on "Surat al-Fatiha." Thus, in the revealed Qur'an, there has certainly occurred tahrif [in the fourth sense]- that is, through addition or omission in the verse or the chapter.

Fifth, tahrif is used in the sense of addition; this is to say that parts of the Qur'an that we now have are not a revealed Word. Alteration in this sense is not true [of the Qur'an]. This is the consensus of all Muslims and it is, indeed, known imperatively. Sixth, tahrif in the meaning of omission, indicates that the text that we have does not include all of the Qur'an that was revealed from heaven; rather, some of it is lost for the people.

Alteration in this sense is the one on which there is disagreement. A group has accepted it as true while others have denied it.

The Opinion of Muslims Regarding al-Tahrif

The accepted view among Muslims is that no alteration has occurred in the Qur'an, and that the text that is in our hands is the whole Qur'an that was revealed to the great Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny). A large number of prominent scholars have proclaimed this. Among them is the leading traditionist (muhaddith) Muhammad b. Babawayh. He has counted the belief in nonalteration of the Qur'an among the doctrines of the Imamite (Twelver) Shi'ites. The jurist-doctor of the Imamite Shi'ite community, Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Tusi, is another major figure who holds this view. He puts forth this view at the beginning of his exegesis of the Qur'an, entitled al-Tibyan, and has also cited the opinion, to that effect, of his teacher, al-Sharif al-Murtada, supporting it with the most complete evidence. The famous exegete al-Tabarsi has also asserted this doctrine, in the introduction to his commentary, Majma 'al-Bayan. Among the leading jurists, this view is declared by Shaykh Ja'far Kashif al-Ghita' in the section of his juridical work, Kashif al-Ghita ', that deals with the Qur'an; in that section, he asserts that there is a consensus on the issue. The most learned jurist, al-Shahshahani, in his discussion on the Qur'an in the work entitled al- 'Urwa al-Wuthqa, maintains the same opinion and ascribes the doctrine of nonalteration to the majority of jurists. Other scholars who uphold this view include the famous traditionist, al-Mawla Muhsin al-Qasani [al-Kashi],[3] and the leading teacher al-Shaykh Muhammad Jawad al-Balaghi.[4]

A group of scholars has ascribed the doctrine of nonalteration to a large number of the most eminent among them. These include al-Shaykh al-Mufid, al-Shaykh al- Baha'i, al-Qadi Nur Allah al-Shustari, and others as prominent. On the other hand, those who hold this view implicitly include Shi'ite scholars who have written about the necessity of the Imamate and have mentioned the shortcomings without dealing with the question of alteration. Had these scholars believed that alterations had been made in the Qur'an, this would have been more worthy of mention than the burning of [the unofficial] codices[5] and other such accounts.

In short, the common view among Shi'ite scholars and researchers, or, rather, what is unanimously agreed upon by them, is the view that no alteration has been made to the Qur'an. However, a faction of Shi'ite

traditionists and a group of Sunni scholars have held the view that alterations were made. According to al-Rafi'i, "A group of scholastic theologians (ahl al-kalam)-who have no preoccupation except to engage in conjecture and allegorical interpretation (ta'wil), and to seek procedures of disputation in every injunction and doctrine-maintain the possibility that some passages of the Qur'an may be missing. They attribute this to the way it was collected."[6] Al-Tabarsi, in his Majma 'al-Bayan, ascribes this view to the Hashwiyya group among the Sunnis.

The reader will soon see that the view about the abrogated readings is the same as that about the alteration. Therefore, the widely held view, among Sunnis, that the recital of some verses of the Qur'an has been abrogated should entail a similar acceptance of the view that the Qur'an was altered.

Abrogation and the Recital (tilawa)

The majority of Sunni scholars mention that the recital of some parts of the Qur'an was abrogated, and they support this view by citing the traditions that relate that these were part of the Qur'an during the Prophet's lifetime. It is appropriate to cite some [twelve] of these traditions in order to show that maintaining the authenticity of these traditions necessitates the belief that alteration in the Qur'an did take place.

1. It was related by Ibn 'Abbas that 'Umar proclaimed from the pulpit:

Verily, God sent Muhammad (peace be upon him) with the truth, and revealed upon him the Book. Among those verses that God revealed is the verse about stoning (al- rajm), which we read, understood, and stipulated. Accordingly, the Messenger of God stoned [the fornicator], and we continued to do so after him. However, I am afraid that with the lapse of time, someone might say, "By God, we did not find the verse about stoning in the Book of God!" and, thus, be misguided into forsaking an obligation [ordained through] its revelation by God. Indeed, the stoning is certainly prescribed in the Book of God for anyone who commits adultery . . . . Moreover, we used to read from the Book of God the following: "Do not awaken an aversion toward your fathers, because it is disbelief for you if you awaken aversion toward your fathers," or, "Indeed, it is disbelief for you if you awaken aversion toward your fathers."[7]

Al-Suyuti mentions that Ibn Ashtah reports in his book, al-Masahif, that al-Layth b. Sa'd said: "The first person [to order] the collection of the Qur'an was Abu Bakr, and Zayd [b. Thabit] wrote it. . . . 'Umar reported the verse about the stoning, but Zayd did not write it, because 'Umar was alone" [in maintaining that it was part of the Qur'an].[8] The verse about the stoning [of the fornicator], which 'Umar claimed to be part of the Qur'an, and which was not accepted as such, has been transmitted in several variants [in the books on the tradition]:

If a [married] man and a woman commit adultery, then certainly stone them-a warning from God. God is Mighty and Wise.

A [married] man and a woman--certainly stone them because of what they have done to [fulfill] the lust.

If a [married] man and a woman commit adultery, then stone them without any hesitation.

Whatever the case, there is nothing in the Qur'an to deduce the injunction about stoning. Hence, if the tradition is authentic, then, undoubtedly, a verse from the Qur'an has been lost.

2. Al-Tabarani has related an authenticated tradition that goes back to 'Umar b. al- Khattab, who said, "The Qur'an consists of 1,027,000 words."[9] However, the Qur'an that is in our hands does not reach even one-third this number; hence, two-thirds of the Qur'an is missing.

3. It has been related, by Ibn 'Abbas, that 'Umar said:

Verily, God, the Exalted and Glorified, sent Muhammad with the truth, and sent with him the Book. Among those [verses] revealed to him was the verse about the stoning. Thus, the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny) stoned [the fornicator] and we stoned after him.

Then he said:

We used to read [the verse in the Qur'an], "Do not awaken an aversion toward your fathers, because it is disbelief," or, "It is disbelief for you if you awaken an aversion toward your father."[10]

4. It has been related by Nafi' that ['Abd Allah] b. 'Umar said: "Verily, someone among you would say, 'I have acquired the complete Qur'an,' and would not know its complete extent. Much of the Qur'an has gone, and, accordingly, he should say, 'I have acquired what has appeared from it.'"[11]

5. 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr related on the authority of 'A'isha, who said: "The 'Surat al- Ahzab' that used to be recited during the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) was two hundred verses. But when 'Uthman [ordered] the compilation of the codices, we could not count in it except what is there now." [12]

6. Hamida bint Abi Yunus said:

My father, who was eighty years old at that time, read to me [the following verse] from 'A'isha's codex: "Indeed God and His angels bless the Prophet. O you who believe!

Bless him and salute him with worthy salutation, and those who pray in the front ranks."[13]

This was [how it read] before 'Uthman changed the text. [14]

7. Abu Harb b. Abi al-Aswad related, on the authority of his father:

Abil Musa al-Ash'ari sent for the reciters of Basra, and some three hundred personages who had studied the reading of the Qur'an came together in his presence. He said: "You are the best among the people of Basra and their reciters. Recite it therefore continuously lest time passes by and your hearts become hardened, as were the hearts of those who were before you [i.e., the people of the Book]. We used to read in the Qur'an a sura which we used to liken in length and severity of tone to 'Silrat al-Bara' a' [sura 9]. However, I have forgotten it, except that I remember the [following] verse from it: 'If the son of Adam had two valleys of wealth, he would have wished for a third one. Nothing fills the belly of the son of Adam except soil.' Moreover, we used to read a sura in the Qur'an which we used to liken to [one of the suras beginning with] sabbib (magnify). But I have forgotten it except the [following) verse from it: 'O you who believe, why do you say that which you do not do. This would be written as a

testimony on your necks, and you would be asked to account for it on the Day of Resurrection. "'[15]

8. Zarr reported the following:

Ubayy b. Ka'b asked me "O Zarr! How many verses have you read in 'Surat al-Ahzab'?" I said, "Seventy-three verses." He said, "No, it was equal in length to 'Surat al-Baqara,' if not longer." [16]

9. Ibn Abu Dawud and Ibn al-Anbari relate that lbn Shihab said:

We have heard that the Qur'an was revealed in many verses. But those who knew it were killed at the Battle of Yamama. They were the ones who remembered it. It was not taught, nor was it written after them." [17]

10. 'Amra reported from 'A'isha, who said:

Among the verses revealed in the Qur'an was, "Ten ascertained sucklings make unlawful" [a marriage between a boy and a girl who are nursed by the same woman]. Then the verse was abrogated to "five ascertained sucklings." When the Prophet died, the "five sucklings" were still being recited as part of the Qur'an. [18]

11. Al-Musawwar b. Makhrama reported the following:

'Umar said to 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Awf, "Do you remember that which was [part of the] revealed [text as it was related] to us, 'Fight as you fought them the first time?'- for we do not find it [in the codex]." He ['Abd al-Rahiman] said, "It was removed along with other things that were removed [from the Qur'an]." [19]

12. It was related by Abu Sufyan al-Khala'i that one day Maslama b. Mukhallad al- Ansari told them, "Tell me of two verses of the Qur'an that were not recorded in the codex." They could not inform him, although Abu al-Kunud Sa'd b. Malik was among them. Then Ibn Maslama recited: 'Those who believed and migrated and fought in the way of God with their wealth and their lives: Be of good cheer, you are indeed the prosperous ones. And those who sheltered them, supported them, and defended them against those with whom God is wrathful: About those, not a soul knows what is in store for them [in the hereafter] that would please their eyes, a reward for what they have performed."[20]

Furthermore, it has been narrated, through several chains of transmission, that the suras entitled "al-Khal"' (Absolute Shunning) and "al-Hafd" (Absolute Obedience) were recorded in the codices of Ibn 'Abbas and Ubayy, which, in part, read:

O God, we seek Your help and ask your forgiveness; we praise and never deny You; we shun and desert those who act wickedly toward You. O God, You alone do we worship and to You we offer our prayers and prostrate ourselves. To You is our endeavor, and in You we seek refuge [or we are quick to obey you? serve you?]. We hope for Your mercy, and fear Your punishment. Indeed, Your punishment to the unbelievers is affixed.

And such other things have been related that have no significance for us to examine.[21] Undoubtedly, the belief in the abrogation of recitals is similar to the belief in alteration and omission. In other words, the abrogation of the recital of these [Qur'anic] verses was decided either by the Prophet himself or by those who assumed community leadership after him. If those who hold this opinion intend to convey that the abrogation was made by the

Messenger of God, then such an assertion is in need of proof. However, all the scholars are in agreement that it is not permissible to abrogate the Book by means of a single narration (khabar al-wahid), and this has been stated clearly by a group of them in the works dealing with the principles of jurisprudence (usul al-fiqh), and in other such works.[22] Significantly, al-Shafi'i and the majority of his associates, including a large number of the Zahirites, have definitely asserted that the abrogation of [any part of] the Book is inadmissible even if supported by an uninterruptedly narrated tradition (sunna mutawatira). Ahmad b. Hanbal follows this view in one of the two traditions narrated on his authority. Indeed, even some of those who maintained the possibility of the abrogation of the Book by means of an uninterruptedly narrated tradition have denied that such a thing has actually happened. [23]

Consequently, how can one correctly attribute the abrogation to the Prophet on the basis of the traditions reported by these narrators? This is not to mention that the attribution of the abrogation to the Prophet is incompatible with those traditions which relate that the omission took place after his death. On the other hand, if they meant that the abrogation took place under those who assumed the leadership of the community after the Prophet, then this would be exactly the same as maintaining the belief in alteration (tahrif). On this basis, it is possible to claim that the view that the Qur'an was altered is the doctrine of the majority of Sunni scholars, because they maintain the permissibility of abrogating the recitation of a verse regardless of whether the ordinance contained in it is abrogated or not. It is significant that the scholars of fundamental legal theory among them have hesitated to permit the ritually unclean persons to recite those verses whose recitation was abrogated, or to permit those who were not in the state of ablutions to touch them. Some of them have actually opted for the opinion denying this permission. It is true, on the other hand, that a group of Mu'tazilites have upheld the impermissibility of the abrogation of a recitation. [24]

It is surprising that a group of Sunni scholars has denied that the belief in the alteration of the Qur'an can be ascribed to any one of them. In fact, al-Alusi contradicts al-Tabarsi's attribution of this belief to the Hashwiyya [among the Sunnis], saying, "None of the Sunni scholars has held such a belief." Stranger still is that he maintains that al-Tabarsi's opinion regarding the absence of alteration in the Qur'an had grown out of the untenability of the Shi’ite belief in alteration, and that that was what made al-Tabarsi seek refuge in its rejection.[25] This is despite the fact that, as we have already mentioned, Shi’ite scholars and researchers commonly recognize, or, rather, are generally in agreement, that no alteration in the sense of omission has been made in the Qur'an. Al-Tabarsi has cited, at length, al-Sharif al-Murtada's opinion in this regard, and his most complete and convincing arguments refuting the opinion about the alteration.[26]

Alteration and the Book of God

In view of the preceding discussion, the truth of the matter is that alteration, in the sense that has caused disputes among Muslim scholars, did

not occur in the Qur'an at all, as the following instances of proof demonstrate.

The first of these is God's saying, "Lo! We, even We, reveal the Reminder, and lo! We verily are its Guardian" (Qur’an 15:9). This verse provides proof that the Qur'an is divinely protected against alteration, and that the unjust, corrupt hands shall never be able to play with it.

Those who maintain the belief in alteration interpret this verse in several ways. First, they say that al-dhikr (the Reminder) refers to the Prophet, for it is used in regard to him in God's saying, "Now God has sent down to you a reminder (dhikr):

A messenger reciting to you the revelations of God" (Qur’an 65: 10-11).

This suggestion is a clear error, for in both cases, dhikr refers to the Qur'an, as indicated by the use of the verb anzala (to send down, reveal). Had the reference been to the Prophet, then the appropriate term would have been arsala (to send), or something to that effect. Moreover, even if the above suggestion holds true for the second of the two verses, it cannot be true of the first. For the protection verse [the first of the two] is preceded by God's saying, "And they say, 'O you to whom the Reminder (al-dhikr) is revealed; lo! you are indeed a madman!"' (Qur’an 15:6).

There is no doubt that al-dhikr in this last verse is a reference to the Qur'an, and, hence, it proves that al-dhikr in the protection verse is also the Qur'an.

Second, they maintain that the protection of the Qur'an means protection from being maligned and from the invalidation of its lofty meanings and profound teachings.

This suggestion is even more manifestly erroneous. If protection against being maligned means protection against being reviled by the unbelievers and the obstinate, then there is no doubt that this is incorrect, for those people have reviled the Qur'an more often than can be counted. However, if it meant that the Qur'an is un-shakable in its meanings, convincing in its reasoning, and straightforward in its approach-and, by virtue of these aspccts and others like them, is far too high in status to be affected by the slandering of the malignant and the doubts of skeptics-this would be correct. However, this would not be in the sense of protection after its revelation, as stated in the protection verse, for the Qur'an, with its special characteristics, protects itself and does not need an external protector. Moreover, this is not the sense suggested by the verse, for it intends the protection of the Qur'an to occur after its revelation.

Third, they maintain that the verse points to the protection of the Qur'an in general and does not indicate that every single copy is protected. This is not necessarily the object of the verse. If what is intended is its protection in general, then it is sufficient for it to be preserved with the [twelfth] Hidden Imam (peace be upon him). This suggestion is the weakest of them all. The protection of the Qur'an must necessarily occur among those for whom it was revealed-that is, humankind in general. As for being preserved with the Imam, this is similar to being preserved in the Preserved Tablet [al-lawh al-mahfaz; cf. Qur’an 85:22], or with one of the angels. This opinion is undoubtedly weak and resembles someone saying, "I am sending you a gift,

and I am protecting it in my possession or in the possession of one close to me."

It is indeed strange that the person who made this suggestion should say that the verse means the protection of the Qur'an in general and not every single copy of it. It is as if he presumes that the dhikr (Reminder) is intended for the written or the recited Qur'an, of which there are certainly many copies. However, it is obvious that this is not the intention here, for the written or the recited Qur'an does not have external permanence. It is for this reason that the protection verse does not refer to this written or recited Qur'an; rather, the dhikr refers to the actual Qur'an that was revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), and the reference to its protection involves its immunity from being trifled with and lost, so that all people will have access to it. This resembles our saying that such and such a poem is "preserved," by which we mean that it is immune from loss in such a way that access to it is impossible.

To be sure, there is yet another argument that invalidates this verse as proof against the occurrence of alteration. This is that whoever claims that the Qur'an has been altered will have to assume that this verse may have been altered, too, because it is one of the verses of the Qur'an; hence, using it as evidence would not be valid until the absence of alteration is proved. Otherwise, if we try to prove the absence of alteration through such verses, this would result in an invalid circular argument.

This argument addresses itself to those who bar the holy Family of the Prophet from the divinely ordained caliphate and who do not follow their teachings and their actions. Such persons are unable to refute this argument. But for those who regard the Prophet's family as the incontestable proof of God for His creatures, and as intimately linked with the Book of God in the obligation to adhere [to it and to them together], this argument does not affect them. The reason for this is that the reliance of the Family on the Qur'an for their decisions, and the fact that they confirmed their followers in its use, proves the evidential nature of the existing Qur'an. And if it is maintained that an alteration has occurred, then, at the most, the evidential nature of the Book will refute the claim of alteration on the strength of their confirmation of it. The second instance of proof that alteration did not occur is God's saying: "For lo!, it is an unassailable Book. Falsehood cannot come at it from before it or behind it. [It is] a revelation from the Wise, the Owner of Praise" (Qur’an 41:41--42).

This noble verse proves that falsehood in all its forms is excluded from the Book of God. This is because when exclusion is applied to the nature of a thing, it implies a general application. There is no doubt that alteration is one of the forms of falsehood, and accordingly, it should have no way to the Book of God.

Those who hold that alterations have occurred in the Qur'an respond to the above argument as follows:

The verses [Qur’an 41:41-42] in question assert that the Book is divinely protected from inconsistencies in its ordinances, and deny that there is falsehood in what it says. To support this argument, those who held it resorted to the tradition related by 'Ali

Ibrahim al-Qummi in his exegesis of the Qur'an, on the authority of the Imam al-Baqir (peace be upon him), who said [in an explanation of the protection verse], "No falsehood can come to it [the Qur'an] from the Torah, or the Gospels, or the Psalms, that preceded it, nor from that which follows it; that is, there will not be a book that will revoke it." Furthermore, they cite the tradition of the two Imams, al-Baqir and al-Sadiq, reported by al-Tabarsi in his Majma 'al-Bayan: "There is no falsehood in [the Qur'an] in what it reports about the past, nor in what it reports about the future."

The response to this argument is as follows:

The two traditions do not restrict falsehood to [misinformation and abrogation] only; thus, they do not contradict the broad applicability of the verse. This is particularly true when we take note of the traditions which convey that Qur'anic notions are not limited to specific objectives. We have already cited some of these traditions in the section dealing with the excellence of the Qur'an in the introduction. Undoubt- edly, the verse refers to the elimination of all sorts of falsehood from the Qur'an in all ages. Since alteration is one of the most obvious forms of falsehood, the Qur'an must therefore be immune from it. The proof that alteration is a form of falsehood that the verses deny in regard to the Qur'an is that [the first of them] describes the Book as "unassailable." Unassailability implies that the thing concerned is protected from change and loss. Had the word batil (falsehood) been specifically intended as inconsistency and untruth, it would not have been in harmony with describing the Book as unassailable.

Alteration and the Sunna

The third instance of proof is provided by the traditions about the "two things of high estimation" (al-thaqalayn), which the Prophet left among those in his community, saying that they shall not part until they meet him at the Pool [of al-Kawthar]. Accordingly, he commanded the community to adhere to both of these things, and these are the Book and the Family (al-'itra). These traditions have been successively reported by both Sunni and Shr'ite chains of transmission. The proof deduced from these traditions regarding the absence of alteration in the Book of God is twofold:

First, the belief in alteration necessarily means that it is no longer incumbent [on the community] to adhere to the revealed Book, because it has been lost to the community due to the alteration. However, the obligation to adhere to the Book remains until the Day of Resurrection, as the traditions about the "two things of high estimation" indicate. Therefore, the belief in alteration is absolutely erroneous.

To make this clearer, [it should be noted that] the traditions point to the bond between the Family and the Book and assert that they would remain among people until the Day of Resurrection. Consequently, it is necessary that there should always be a person linked to the Book, and it is necessary that the Book should always exist so as to be linked to the Family, until they return to the Prophet by the Pool. This would be in order that the adherence to them would serve to protect the community from being led astray, as the Prophet declared in this tradition. It goes without say- ing that the adherence to the Family means supporting them, obeying them in what they command and prohibit, and following their guidance. This thing is not condi- tional

upon establishing contact with the Imam and speaking to him directly, for this was not possible for every obligated person (mukallaf) during the period of [his] presence, let alone [the current] period of occultation. The stipulation about the possibility for some people to reach the Imam (peace be upon him) is a claim without evidence and justification. The Shi'ites, during the absence of the Imam, adhere to him, support him, and carry out his commands. One of these commands is to refer to the transmitters of the Imams' teachings in dealing with future contingencies. As for adhering to the Qur'an, it is something that is impossible without accessing it. Hence, it is necessary that it should be among the community, in order for them to adhere to it. Otherwise, they might stray from the truth. This elucidation directs us to regard the invalidity of the argument that the Qur'an is preserved and is in the possession of the Hidden Imam, because the existence of the Qur'an [whether it is in the Preserved Tablet or with the Hidden Imam] is not, by itself, sufficient for people to adhere to it.

An objection has been made to this elucidation to the effect that the traditions about the thaqalayn indicate that the verses that are free of alteration are those that contain the ordinances, because these are the ones that people have been asked to adhere to. Consequently, they do not refute the occurrence of alteration in the other verses of the Qur'an.

Our response to this is that the entire Qur'an, with all its verses, has been revealed by God for the guidance of humanity, and for leading them to their full potential of perfection in all respects. As such, there is no difference between verses which contain ordinances and other types of verses. We pointed out earlier that, although the apparent sense of the Qur'an is a narrative one, its hidden purpose is exhortation. However, most of those who believe that alterations have occurred in the Qur'an claim that that happened in the verses that deal with the question of wilaya (authority) or in those that resemble them. It is clear that if these verses are proven to be part of the Qur'an, then adherence to them should also be incumbent on the community.

Second, the belief in alteration entails that the Qur'an could not be used as an evidential text, and its literal sense should, accordingly, not be adhered to. Moreover, those who hold the alteration view would be implying that the pure Imams confirmed the Book that is in our hands and approved the idea that people should resort to it even though its alteration had been established. In other words, the evidential character of the existing Book derives from its having been endorsed by the Imams as a basis for reasoning. The obvious meaning of the uninterruptedly transmitted traditions is that the Qur'an is one of the two recourses for the community and the foremost of the two sources of independent proof to which it is necessary to adhere. Rather, it is the greater of the two things of high estimation (thaqalayn). Accordingly, its evidential character is not derived from the evidential character of the smaller of the two esteemed things.

The reason that the Qur'an ceases to be the proof when its alteration is assumed is the possibility that the literal meanings of the Qur'an have a context [which is presumably omitted], and which points to the opposite of this apparent meaning. In this case it is not acceptable to rely on the

[principle that states that the] fundamentality of the absence of the context [is applicable] because [certain words or phrases] have been omitted. The proof based on this principle is derived from the rational argument that one should follow the literal sense, and should not be concerned with the possibility of the context being inconsistent with it. We explained, in our work on the fundamentals of jurisprudence, that the established measure of rational principles, no matter how small, dictates that rational persons not be concerned about the existence of a separate context, nor about a connected context when the reason for the probability is the neglect on the part of the speaker to explain, or on the part of the listener to be informed. As for the probability of the existence of the connected context apart from these two reasons, the rational persons have suspended judgment about following the apparent sense of the passage. The following example illustrates this case. A person receives a letter from someone he must obey, in which he is ordered to buy a house. But he finds that part of the letter is destroyed, and thinks it probable that the destroyed part contained the specifications of the house he was required to purchase, as to its size, price, or location. The rational persons would not adhere to the general tone of the existing letter, relying on the fundamentality of the absence of the connected context, and would not purchase any house as a fulfilment of the order of the person who sent the letter, nor would they regard the one who carries out such a command as having obeyed the instructions of the master.

The reader's doubts may go further than this, and he may say that this view undermines the foundation of the science of jurisprudence, and the deduction of juridical decisions. The reason for saying this is that the most important documentary evidence [for the deduction of juridical decisions] is found in the traditions transmitted from the infallible Imams (peace be upon them), and it is likely that their words and phrases have connected contexts that have not reached us. [In that case how could one trust these reports in deriving legal injunctions?] However, a little careful analysis of the situation would remove this illusion. This is because the fundamental principle in the matter of reporting, when the connected context does not exist, is the apparent narration of the reporter, for it is incumbent upon him to explain such a context if the statement of the infallible Imam had one. The probability that the reporter might have neglected to mention thi.s context cannot be taken into consideration.

Certainly, the belief in alteration means that adherence to the literal meanings of the Qur'an is not permitted. And, in order to prove this conclusion, there is no need to assert comprehensive knowledge about the inconsistency of the apparent sense in some verses, so as to respond to this conclusion by maintaining that the occurrence of alteration in the Qur'an is not in need of such knowledge as a general principle. Moreover, this overall knowledge cannot be implemented, because some aspects of it are not part of the verses that contain injunctions, and accordingly, it is of no consequence in the matter of performing [Legally ordained duties]. However, the comprehensive knowledge can be implemented if it has practical consequences for any aspect of [performing a religious obligation].

Some of those who believe that alterations have been made in the Qur'an may claim that the guidance that the infallible Imams provide for reasoning on the basis of the apparent meanings of the Qur'an, and their confirming their followers on adherence to it, establish the evidential character of the apparent meanings of the Qur'an, even though this character had formerly been lost because of alteration.

Nonetheless, this assertion is unsound, because this guidance from the infallible Imams, and this stipulation to their followers to adhere to the apparent meanings of the Qur'an, result from the Qur'an itself being an [unaltered], independent proof, and not because they wanted to take the initiative in making it so.

Permission to Recite the Chapters in the Salat (Ritual Prayers)

The fourth [source of] proof [that alteration did not occur]: The Imams of the Prophet's Family have ordered the recitation of a complete sura of the Qur'an after the recitation of "al-Fatiha" (the Opening Sura) in the first two cycles of the obligatory prayer, and have decided that it is permissible to divide one sura or more [between the first two cycles] of the prayer with verses.[27]

It is clear that these rulings were established in the Shari'a when the prayer was ordained, and that precautionary dissimulation (taqiyya) is not at all involved here. Consequently, for those who maintain that the Qur'an was altered, it is necessary that they should not recite any sura that is likely to have been altered, because a definite obligation requires a definite exemption [for the performer to be released from its execution]. A person who holds the alteration view may claim that he cannot find a complete sura [free of possible alteration]. In that case, it is not obligatory for him [to recite a complete sura in the prayer], because the divine ordinances are applicable to those who are capable of performing them. Nevertheless, this claim is accu- rate if one maintains that alteration has occurred in all the suras of the Qur'an.

But if there is a chapter, like "Surat al-Tawhid" (sura 112), in which there is no probability of alteration, then it is necessary for him to recite nothing else. Moreover, a person maintaining the existence of alterations may not take the permission the Imams granted to the worshipers to read any chapter in the daily prayer as sufficient proof that he may select any sura [for recitation], when it was not permissible for him to regard it as sufficient before the permission [of the Imams], because of the alteration [consideration]. This is because the permission from the Imams [to do that] is, in itself, evidence that no alteration has occurred in the Qur'an; otherwise, [this permission] would have necessarily rendered the obligatory prayer [recital] discharged [by nullifying the recitation of the altered suras] without a pressing reason. For it is obvious that the required recitation of unaltered suras does not constitute an infraction of precautionary dissimulation (taqiyya). In fact, we see that the Imams have recommended to their followers that they recite the "al-Tawhid" and "al-Qadar" in all the daily prayers. What, then, prevented them from making these two, or any other

verses in which there is no likelihood of alteration, obligatory [for recitation in the prayer]?

However, those who maintain the belief in alteration may claim that the obligatory recital of a complete sura [i.e., as it was revealed] has been abrogated by the obligation to read any complete sura as it is in the existing Qur'an. At any rate, we do not believe that they would maintain such a thing, because abrogation has definitely not occurred after the [lifetime of the] Prophet, although there has been a discussion among scholars about its possibility, or otherwise-a subject that is beyond our scope at this time.

To summarize, there is no doubt that the Imams ordered their followers to recite any sura from the Qur'an that is in our hands for the performance of the daily prayer. This injunction is well established, without any shade of doubt, nor any possibility that it was made as a precautionary dissimulation, and it must have been ordained either during the time of the Prophet or after that [under the Imams]. The latter proposition, however, is wrong because it would have amounted to an abrogation [of a practice of the Prophet], and this certainly did not take place after [the time of] the Prophet, though in itself it is possible. Thus, it is necessary to regard [the religious ordinance pertaining to the recitation of a complete sura in the prayer] as the established practice from the time of the Prophet himself. In other words, this means that no alteration has been made in the Qur'an. This form of argumentation applies to every legal ordinance that the Imams have made incumbent in the recitation of a complete verse from the Qur'an.

Assertion about Alteration under the Caliphs

The fifth argument [that alteration did not occur involves the following]. Those who maintain the belief in alteration claim that it took place either under the first two caliphs (Abu Bakr and 'Umar), after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), or under 'Uthman when he assumed the affairs of the community, or under some other person when the first period of the caliphate ended. All these assertions [about when it occurred] are incorrect. As for the charge that the alteration took place under Abu Bakr and 'Umar, it is negated by the following. Ifthey did alter the Qur'an, this was either done unintentionally- because of the fact that the complete text of the Qur'an was not available for them, having not been compiled by then-or it was done deliberately. If they had deliberately altered the Qur'an, this would have in- volved either the verses that adversely affected their leadership or verses that did not have such an effect. The possibilities are therefore three in number.

As for the possibility that the complete text of the Qur'an had not reached them, this is unquestionably wrong. The attention which the Prophet paid to the Qur'an- memorizing it, reading it, and reciting its verses-and the attention which the Companions, likewise, lavished on the Qur'an, both during the Prophet's lifetime and af- ter his death, lead us to the definitive conclusion that the Qur'an was preserved with them, whether in the form of a collected text or fragments; memorized in their hearts; or written on paper. If they had paid so much attention to memorizing pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and orations, it is hard to imagine that they did not pay similar attention to the preservation of the Book of the Almighty, [especially when] they had

risked death by calling for and announcing its ordinances, and, for its sake, had emigrated from their country, spent their wealth, separated from their women and children, and taken the stance by means of which they had brightened the face of history. Would a sane person imagine, after all this, that they would not take good care of the Qur'an, leaving it to be dispersed among people, so that they eventually needed two testifiers in order to establish its text? Is this not merely like imagining that additions were made to the Qur'an, or even like imagining that nothing has survived from the revealed Qur'an? Nevertheless, the uninterruptedly narrated traditions about the thaqalayn (two things of high estimation), as cited earlier, indicate the falsity of the probability. This is because the Prophet's saying that "I leave among you the two things of high estimation, the Book of God and my Family" would not be correct if some of the Qur'an had been lost during his lifetime, for what is left after that would be a portion of the Book, not all of it. On the contrary, in the thaqalayn tradition, there is indisputable proof of the compilation of the Qur'an and its collection during the lifetime of the Prophet, for the term "Book" does not apply to the totality of dispersed things, nor to the text that is preserved "in the hearts" [i.e., memorized]. (We shall discuss those who collected the Qur'an during the Prophet's time.) Even if we were to concede that the Muslims did not care to collect the Qur'an during the Prophet's time, why did not the Prophet himself do that, considering his intense concern about the Qur'an? Was he unaware of the consequences of this neglect [on his part], or was he unable to collect it for lack of the means? It is obvious that all of these propositions are unfounded.

As for the possibility that the first two caliphs intentionally altered the Qur'an in the verses that did not have a bearing on their leadership and the leadership of their associates, this is intrinsically far-fetched, especially in light of its serving no purpose whatsoever for them. As such, alteration did not occur under them. Moreover, how could they introduce alterations in the Qur'an when the question of the caliphate was actually founded on politics, although in appearance it was regarded as a matter of religious importance. Did any of those who refused to pay allegiance to the caliphs argue against them [on the issue of alteration], including those who had opposed Abu Bakr's succession to the caliphate, like Sa'd b. 'Ubada and his compan- ions? [More important], did the Commander of the Faithful ['Ali b. Abi Talib] mention this in his famous speech of al-Shiqshiqiyya (the third sermon in Nahj al-Balagha) and in other statements in which he objected to those who preceded him to the caliphate? Moreover, it is not possible to claim that the Muslims had objected to them on the alteration issue, and that this has somehow remained hidden from us. Undoubtedly, this claim is clearly false.

As for the possibility that alteration was intentionally introduced by the two caliphs in those verses that were inimical to their leadership, that too should be ruled out completely. Indeed, the Commander of the Faithful ['Ali] and his wife, the veracious and pure [Fatima] (peace be upon both of them), and a group of their supporters, had opposed the accession of Abu Bakr and 'Umar to the caliphate. They contended against them on the basis of things they had heard from the Prophet, and they called on those of the Helpers (Ansar) and Emigrants (Muhajirun) who had witnessed these events

to teslify to their authenticity. They also contended against Abu Bakr by means of the Ghadir event [in which the Prophet had nominated 'Ali as his successor] and other such traditions. Al-Tabarsi mentions, in his book al-Ihtijaj, that twelve persons argued against the succession of Abu Bakr and produced textual evidence to support their argument against him. In addition, the well-known scholar al-Majlisi compiled a chapter on the subject of the Commander of the Faithful's ['Ali's] vindication of his rights in the matter of the caliphate.[28] Had there been something in the Qur'an inimical to their leadership, it would certainly have been more worthy of mention in these arguments, and more deserving of calling upon all Muslims to witness, especially since the issue of the caliphate according to those [who believe in the alteration of the Qur'an] became an issue much earlier than the date of the Qur'an's collection. The fact that the Companions did not mention anything [about the alteration], neither at the beginning of the caliphate nor after the caliphate had fallen to 'Ali, is the irrefutable proof that the said alteration [under the first two caliphs] did not occur.

As for the possibility that the alterations were introduced by 'Uthman, this is even more far-fetched than the earlier assertion [regarding the first two caliphs]. There are several reasons that support this conclusion.

1. By the time 'Uthman became caliph, Islam had spread to such an extent that it was impossible for him, or even for anyone more powerful than him, to remove anything from the Qur'an.

2. Had 'Uthman' s alteration been in connection with the verses that neither dealt with the question of authority, nor, in one way or the other, adversely affected the leadership of those who preceded him, then this would have meant doing something for which there was no justification. If, on the other hand, his alterations had been in connection with something to do with the question of leadership, then this definitely did not occur. The reason is that if the Qur'an had included such verses, they would have been known among the people, and the caliphate would not have passed to 'Uthman.

3. Had 'Uthman altered the Qur'an, that would have served as the clearest argument for, and major justification of, his public assassination. His opponents would not have needed to argue against him on the basis of his having diverged from the practice of the two preceding caliphs in handling the public trust of the Muslims, and other such arguments.

4. Had 'Uthman committed the act of alteration, it would have then been incumbent on 'Ali, following the death of 'Uthman, to restore the Qur'an to its original state when it was recited during the Prophet's time and the time of the first two caliphs. Such an action on his part would not have drawn any criticism; on the contrary, it would have given a great help to his cause and would have served as a strong argument against those who rebelled against him [i.e., the Umayyads] under the rubric of avenging 'Uthman's blood. More specifically, he could have used it to defend his orders to restitute the land grants that 'Uthman had distributed [from the public trust]. He had referred to this matter in one of his speeches [during the reign of 'Uthman], saying:

I solemnly declare that even if I were to find that it [the distributed public lands] had been used by women to get married, or in purchasing slave-girls, I would still have returned them [to the treasury]. Indeed, in doing justice, [the scope] is wide. He to whom justice is hard, injustice is even harder.[29]

If this is how 'Ali acquitted himself in the matter of public lands, what would he have done in the case of the Qur'an had it been altered? His endorsement of the Qur'an that existed during his reign is evidence that there was no alteration in it.

As for alterations occurring after the period of the [first four] caliphs, no such thing has been claimed by anyone we know of. However, this view has been attributed to some who believe in the occurrence of alteration. Hence, it is claimed that al-Hajjaj,[30] when he arose in support of the Umayyads, deleted many verses from the Qur'an that were revealed in the criticism of the Umayyads, and added to it things that were not part of it. He wrote Qur'anic codices and sent them to Egypt, Syria, Mekka, Medina, Basra, and Kufa. The Qur'an that is in existence now is in conformity with these texts. As for the other texts, he gathered them and destroyed them all, leaving not even one copy.[31]

These assertions resemble the senseless jabber of the feverish and the superstitions of the insane and children. This is because al-Hajjaj was one of the governors of the Umayyads. He was far too insignificant, and of too low a status, to harm the Qur'an in any way. In fact, he was too ineffectual to make changes even in the ancillary branches of Islamic knowledge. How, then, could he change the foundation of religion and the pillar of the Shari'a? Moreover, where did he acquire the authority to [distribute his own Qur'anic codex] in all Islamic lands when the Qur'an was already in wide circulation there? And how is it that no historian has mentioned this major feat in the books of history, and that no critic has touched upon it in spite of the importance of the matter and the many good reasons to report it? More important, how is it that no Muslim narrated it in al-Hajjaj's time, and how did the Muslims overlook this deed after his time had passed and his authority ended?

Even if we were to assume that he was able to collect all the different manuscripts of the Qur'an, and not a single manuscript in all the sprawling Muslim lands escaped his power, was he capable of removing the Qur'an from the hearts of the Muslims who had memorized it, with their number at that time being known only to God? Furthermore, if some of the verses in the Qur'an had been injurious to the Umayyads, Mu'awiya would have surely removed them long before the time of al-Hajjaj, because he was more powerful and influential than al-Hajjaj. [Had this happened], the supporters of 'Ali would have taken this as a strong point against Mu'awiya, and used it as an argument, as they used other arguments that have been preserved in history and in the books of tradition and theology. From what has been said above, it is clear that anyone who asserts that alterations did take place in the Qur'an would be at variance with the most elementary reasoning. There is a proverb which says: "Tell a person about something that is impossible to have happened. If he believes it will happen, then he is certainly not rational."

The Errors of Those Who Maintain the Alteration View

Those who hold that alteration occurred in the Qur'an cling to a number of errors that need to be presented and refuted, one by one.

The First Error

First, alteration, they say, occurred in the Torah and the Gospel. According to traditions narrated through various chains of uninterrupted transmission, by Sunni as well as Shi'ite traditionists, [they cite] all that has occurred in the past communities, [and say that] something similar will certainly occur in this [Muslim] community. One of these traditions is related by Ibn Babawayh al-Sadiq in his Kamal al-Din on the authority of Ghiyath b. Ibrahim, who reported from al-Sadiq, who had reported from his forefathers. He [al-Sadiq] said:

The Messenger of God said, "All that has happened among the past nations will surely happen in this nation, exactly as a horseshoe follows another and a feather of an arrow follows another [i.e., they are identical]."[32]

What follows from this is that alteration will necessarily occur in the Qur'an; otherwise, the signification of these traditions will not come to pass.

The response to this is as follows.

First, the traditions in question are supported by single narrations, and, consequently, they have neither theoretical nor practical value. The claim that they have been transmitted without interruption is arbitrary, with no evidence to support it. These traditions have not been recorded in any of the four authoritative compilations of Shiite traditions. Hence, it does not follow that the incidence of alteration in the Torah will inevitably be repeated in the Qur'an.

Second, if this reasoning were sound, it would have certainly been evidence that additions have been made to the Qur'an, as they have to the Torah and the Gospel; and it is evident that this is incorrect.

Third, many incidents have occurred in past nations the like of which has not taken place in the [Muslim] community, such as the worshiping of the calf; the wandering of the Children of Israel for forty years; the drowning of Pharaoh and his companions; the dominion of Solomon over humans and jinns; the raising of Jesus to Heaven; the death of Aaron, who was the legatee of Moses, before the death of Moses himself; the receiving of nine manifest divine signs by Moses; the Immaculate Conception of Jesus without a father; the transmutation of many among the ancients into monkeys and swine; and countless other events. This is a most convincing argument that what is intended here is not the literal statement of the traditions but some semblance of it. Accordingly, for alteration to have occurred in the [Muslim] community, it is sufficient that they [Muslims] do not observe the boundaries of the Qur'an even when they maintain its outward form, as in the tradition cited at the beginning of this discussion [the letter from al-Baqir to Sa'd al-Khayr]. This is further supported by another tradition, related by Abu Waqid al-Laythi:

When the Messenger of God set out for Khaybar, he came upon a tree [sacred to the unbelievers] known as Dhat al-Anwat [tree of many branches]. The unbelievers used to hang their weapons on it [for a blessing].

Thus, the believers said, "O Messenger of God! Designate for us a [sacred] tree like Dhat al-Anwat , [the one] they have for themselves." The Prophet said: "Glory be to God! This is just as the people of Moses said, 'Designate for us a god, just as they have a goddess.' By the One in whose hands is my soul! Indeed, you will follow the path of those before you."[33]

This tradition is explicit in stating that what shall occur in the community will resemble certain aspects of what happened in past nations.

Fourth, even if it is admitted that these traditions were transmitted without interruption, and that they are accurate in what they indicate, they still do not prove that alteration did occur in the past. On the contrary, it might happen in the future, whether in the form of addition or omission. What appears from the tradition of al-Bukhari is that it (i.e., what has happened in the past nations would also happen in this community) could extend to the Day of Judgment. As such, how can one argue that alteration occurred in the early days of Islam or during the first period of the caliphate?

The Second Error

According to this error, 'Ali (peace be upon him) possessed a written text [of the Qur'an] other than the one existing now. He presented it to the community, but they refused to accept it from him. Moreover, his text included parts that are not present in the Qur'an that we have in our hands. From this it follows that the existing Qur'an is deficient when compared with the text of the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali. This is the type of alteration that has been the subject of so much controversy. The traditions which indicate it are numerous.

Among them is the one narrating the argument of 'Ali against a group of Emigrants (muhajirun) and Helpers (ansar), in which he is reported to have said:

O Talha! Every verse that was revealed by God, the Exalted, to Muammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) is in my possession, dictated by the Messenger of God and written by my hand. [Moreover], the interpretation of every verse that was revealed by God, the Exalted, to Muhammmad-of all things that are lawful or unlawful, subject to legal punishment or ordinances, or anything needed by the community until the Day of Resurrection- is in my possession, dictated by the Messenger of God and written by my hand, to the extent of [rules regarding] the blood money for the scratchmark. [34]

Another tradition reports Ali's argument against a heretic (zindiq), in which 'Ali said that he had "brought the complete Book [of God], comprising the interpretation and the revelation, the precise and the ambiguous verses, the abrogating and the abrogated verses; nothing was missing from it, [not even] a letter alif, nor lam. But they did not accept it from him."[35]

Another tradition is related by al-Kulayni in his al-Kafi, with a chain of transmission going back to Jabir, who reported from the Imam al-Baqir (peace be upon him), who had said, "No one can claim that he possesses all of the Qur'an, its exoteric form and its esoteric dimension, except the legatees (awsiya') [of the Prophet]."[36]

He also reports that Jabir said:

I heard Abu Ja'far [al-Baqir] say that no one has ever claimed that he collected the Qur'an in its entirety as it was revealed, except a liar; and no one collected it and memorized it as it was revealed by God, the Exalted, except 'Ali b. Abi Talib and the Imams (peace be upon them) who came after him.[37]

The response to this is as follows.

That there existed a text of the Qur'an, in the possession of Amir al-Mu'minin ['Ali] (peace be upon him), differing in arrangement of the chapters from the existing Qur'an, is something that should not be doubted. The fact that prominent scholars are unanimous in affirming its existence spares us the trouble of proving it. However, even if it is true that his Qur'an incorporated additions that are not part of the existing Qur'an, this does not mean that these additions comprised parts of the Qur'an and have been dropped from it due to alteration. Rather, the correct position in this regard is that these additions were the exegesis in the form of interpretations, and that which goes back to the explanation of the Divine Speech, or were in the form of revelations from God, explaining the intention [of the verses].

Furthermore, this error has stemmed from defining the terms ta'wil and tanzil according to the convention, among later scholars, of applying tanzil to what was revealed as a Qur'an, and ta 'zil to the explanation of the intent of the words, considering that to be a sense other than their literal one. However, the two meanings of these technical terms are modern conventions. There is no indication in the [classical] lexicons to support this specific meaning of them. Hence, they must not be understood in this sense when they occur in the traditions transmitted on the authority of the Imams from ahl al-bayt.

At any rate, ta'wil is a verbal noun derived from AWL, meaning "to return," as in the sentence "He returned (awwala) the judgment to the people it concerned." The word ta'wil may also be used to mean the consequences and the eventual results of a matter. It is in this sense that the word occurs in the Qur'an:

And will teach you the interpretation (ta'wil) of events (Qur’an 12:6). Announce to us its interpretation (ta'wilih) (Qur’an 12:36). This is the interpretation of my dream (Qur’an 12:100). Such is the interpretation of that wherewith you could not bear (Qur’an 18:82).

These are some of the examples of the usage of the word ta 'wrl in the Qur'an. Accordingly, the meaning of the word ta'wil in the Qur'an is "that to which the speech refers," that is, its "eventual sense" regardless of whether it is apparent through the literal sense and can be understood by whoever knows Arabic, or whether it is an inner sense known to none save "those firmly established in knowledge" [cf. Qur’an 3:7]. Tanzil is also a verbal noun, derived from the root NZL. It may be used to refer to that which "comes down, descends." This is the sense in which it is used in many verses of the Qur'an. Thus, God, the Exalted, says:

This is indeed a noble Qur'an. In a well-kept Book. Which none touches save the purified. A revelation (tanzil) from the Lord of the Worlds (Qur’an 56:78-80).

As mentioned earlier, not all that has been sent down from God [has to be in the form of a] revelation for it to be necessarily part of the Qur'an. Consequently, that which can be construed from the traditions regarding this point is that the codex of 'Ali (peace be upon him) included additions consisting of tanzil or ta'wil, as explained above. There is no evidence in any of these traditions to substantiate that these additions were part of the Qur'an. It is in this light that we must view what has been reported about the listing of the names of hypocrites in the text of Amir al-Mu'minin ['Ali]. There, names were essentially listed as part of the exegesis [and not of the actual revealed text of the Qur'an].

This is corroborated by the irrefutable evidence provided earlier in connection with the absence of any omission from the Qur'an. In addition, the conduct of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) toward the hypocrites does not support such a thing [i.e., the view that the list of hypocrites was part of the Qur'an]. On the contrary, he behaved toward them with forbearance, to win their hearts, and concealed what he knew about their fraudulence. This is clear to anyone with the slightest knowledge of the Prophet's life and his virtuous conduct. How could it be possible that he would mention the names of the hypocrites in the Qur'an and ask them to curse themselves, and command all other Muslims to do the same, and urge them on that day and night? Is this at all possible so as to justify that one should investigate its soundness or falsehood, or insist on demonstrating it by what some traditions say about the existence of the names of a number of hypocrites in the text of 'Ali (peace be upon him)? Can this [mention of names of the hypocrites] be analogous to the mention of Abu Lahab [by name in the Qur'an], [his] having been cursed because of his associationism (shirk) and his hostility toward the Prophet, in spite of the Prophet's knowledge that he would die in disbelief? Well, it is not far-fetched to maintain that the Prophet did mention the names of the hypocrites to some of his close associates, like the Amir al-Mu'minin ['Ali] and others in his special gatherings.

To summarize, even if it is correct that there were additions in the text of 'Ali (peace be upon him), they were not part of the Qur'an, and not part of what the Messenger of God was commanded to convey to the community. To maintain, on the basis of such additions, that his text contained additional revelations is merely an opinion without evidence, and definitely it is false. All the previously discussed evidence in relation to the absence of alteration (tahrif) provides irrefutable proof in this connection, too.

The Third Error

According to this [error], there are uninterruptedly narrated traditions, on the authority of the Imams from ahl al-bayt, that corroborate the view that alteration of the Qur'an definitely took place and that, therefore, one must accept this view.

The response [to this is as follows]. Surely, these traditions do not indicate that alterations have occurred in the sense of the word on which Muslims do not agree. To make this clearer, [it should be noted that] most of the traditions are appended with weak chains of transmission, having been narrated from the book of Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Sayyan, who,

according to the consensus of the scholars of biographical dictionaries ('ulama' al-rijal) held corrupt beliefs and maintained a belief in metempsychosis. Others have been narrated by 'Ali b. Ahmad al-Kufi, who, as reported by the scholars of biographical dictionaries, was a liar, and held false beliefs. Nevertheless, the sheer number of these traditions forces us to accept that some of them are authentic accounts related on the authority of the infallible Imams, and must, at least, be regarded with confidence. In addition, some of them have been related through credible chains of transmission. Consequently, there is no need to dwell upon the source of each tradition in particular; [instead, we shall concentrate on the contents of each tradition].

Examination of the Traditions on Tahrif

It is necessary to discuss the meanings of these traditions, and to clarify that they are not all united in purport, and that they can be divided into groups. We should therefore undertake to explain the differences of purport and speak about each group of traditions in that light.

The First Group of Traditions

These are the traditions which mention tarif explicitly. This group consists of some twenty traditions, of which we shall mention some examples and leave out the ones which have the same content. They are as follows.

1. A tradition [was] reported on the authority of 'All b. Ibrahim al-Qummi, whose chain of transmission goes back to Abu Dharr, who said:

When the verse "On that day some faces will brighten and some others will darken" was revealed, the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny) said: "My community will return to me on the Day of Resurrection under five banners." Then he [Abu Dharr] added that the Messenger of God will ask the groups about the way they treated the thaqalayn (the two objects of high estimation). The first group will say: "As for the greater one, we altered it and tossed it away behind our backs; as for the smaller one, we became its enemies, hated it, and wronged it." The second group will say: "As for the greater one, we burned it, tore it into pieces, and opposed it; as for the smaller one, we became its enemies and fought it. . . ."

2. A tradition was reported on the authority of Ibn Tawus and al-Sayyid al-Muhaddith al-Jaza'ri, their chain of transmission going back to al-Hasan b. al-Hasan al-Samarra'i, who related, in a long tradition, that one of the things that the Prophet told Hudhayfa, about the person who violates the Sacred House, is that he will "lead the people astray from the Path of God, make alterations in His Book, and change my sunna (precedent)."

3. A tradition was reported on the authority of Sa'd b. 'Abd Allah al-Qummi, whose chain of transmission goes back to Jabir al-Ju'fi, and, through him, to the Imam al- Baqir (peace be upon). Jabir said:

The Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny) prayed in Mina. Then he said: "O people, I leave among you al-thaqalayn. If you hold on to them, you shall never be misguided. [These are] the Book of God and my family, and the Ka'ba is the Sacred House [which you should respect all

the time]!" Then Abil Ja'far [al-Baqir] added: "As for the Book of God, they have altered it; the Ka'ba, they have destroyed; and the family, they have slain. All these trusts of God they have abandoned and from them they have rid themselves."

4. A tradition was reported by Ibn Babawayh al-Saduq in his Kitab al-Khisal, with his chain of transmission going back to Jabir, who related it on the authority of the Prophet, who said:

Three on the Day of Resurrection will come complaining: The Book, the mosque, and the Family. The Book will say, "O Lord, they have altered me and rented me." The mosque will say, "O Lord, they abandoned and wasted me." The Family will say, "O Lord, they killed, rejected, and dispersed us."

5. A tradition was related by al-Kulayni and Ibn Babawayh al-Saduq, with their chain of transmission going back to 'Ali b. Suwayd, who said: "I wrote a letter to Abu al- Hasan Musa [al-Kazim] when he was in prison." Then he went on until he described the Imam's response, in which he said, "They altered it and changed it."

6. A tradition was reported by Ibn Shahr Ashub, going back to 'Abd Allah, who narrated the oration of al-Husayn b. 'Ali on the day of 'Ashura', in which the Imam said, "Undoubtedly, you are the tyrants among the community, the deviates among the [Mekkan] Confederates,[38] the repudiators of the Book, the expectorations of the Devil, the association of the crimes, and the corruptors (muharrafi) of the Book."

7. A tradition was reported in Kamil al-Ziyarat on the authority of al-Hasan b. 'Atiyya, who related it from the Imam al-Sadiq, who said, "When you enter the sacred area around the grave [of al-Husayn b. 'Ali at Karbala'], say, "O God, curse those who falsified Your Prophet, and those who destroyed Your Ka'ba, and those who corrupted Your Book."

8. A tradition was reported by al-Hijal on the authority of Qutba b. Maymun, who received it from 'Abd al-A'la:

He [al-Hijal] said: Abu 'Abd Allah [al-Sadiq] (peace be upon him) said, 'The speakers of Arabic altered the Speech of God from its original form."'

Actual Signification of the Traditions

The response to the deductions on the basis of this group of traditions is that it is apparent from the last tradition cited that alteration here is intended [in the sense of the phonetic corruption] according to the differences among the readers, and the application of their personal judgment in the readings. This, in tum, resulted from the differences in the manner of reading while preserving the essence of the Qur'an and its original sense. We have already explained that alteration in this sense undoubtedly occurred as a result of the fact that the seven readings were not based on uninterrupted transmission. In fact, this form of tahrif would definitely have occurred even if the seven readings were based on uninterrupted transmission. This is because the readings were numerous, and they were based on the conjectural judgments [of the readers], which could have required them to make changes in the readings. Accordingly, this tradition has no connection with the intention of those who maintain that alteration occurred.

As for the remaining traditions, their apparent meaning points to tahrif in the sense of explaining the verses at variance with their actual meanings,

which, in tum, goes hand in hand with denying the excellence of the Family of the Prophet (ahl al-bayt) (peace be upon them) and with displaying animosity toward them and fighting them. This explanation is explicitly supported by the attribution of tahrif to the killers of al-Husayn b. 'Ali, in the oration quoted earlier.

As for the tradition noted by al-Kulayni in his al-Kafi, which was cited earlier in this chapter, the Imam al-Baqir says there: "Among their ways of repudiating the Book [of God] is that they stand by its wording, whereas they misconstrue its limits."

We have mentioned that tahrif in this sense has definitely occurred, and as such, it is not part of the dispute. Had such alteration not occurred, the rights of the Family would have remained unviolated and the sanctity of the Prophet in their regard would have been complied with. Nor would matters have reached the point of depriving them of their rights and hurting the Prophet through them.

Second Group of Traditions

These are the numerous traditions that convey the fact that in some revealed verses of the Qur'an, the names of the Imams (peace be upon them) were mentioned. An example of them is the tradition reported by al-KulaynI, whose chain of transmission goes back to Muhammad b. al-Fudayl, who related on the authority of Abu al-Hasan (peace be upon him). He [al-Kulayni] said:

The authority (wilayai) of 'Ali b. Ab Talib is prescribed in all the [revealed] texts of the prophets. God never sent a prophet except with the [acknowledgment] of the prophethood of Muhammad and the wilaya of his legatee-God bless them both and their progeny.

Another tradition has been narrated by al-'Ayyashi, whose chain of transmission goes back to the Imam al- Sadiq (peace be upon him). He said, "If the Qur'an were read as it was revealed, our names would be found there."

Still another tradition is related by al-Kulayni in his al-Kafi and by al-'Ayyashi in his Tafsir, on the authority of the Imam al-Baqir; and in Kanz al-Fawa'id through several chains of transmission, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas; and by Furat b. Ibrahim al-Kufi in his Tafsir, through several chains of transmission, on the authority of al- Abagh b. Nubata. According to this tradition, Amir al-Mu'minin ['Ali] said:

The Qur'an was revealed in four equal parts: One-fourth is about us [the ahl al-bayt], one-fourth about our enemies, one-fourth consists of customs (sunan) and parables, and one-fourth about obligations and ordinances; and to us belongs the noblest part of the Qur'an.

In another tradition, al-Kulayni reports that the Imam al-Baqir said:

Gabriel revealed the following verse on the Prophet, in this manner: "And if you are in doubt about what We have revealed to our servant-regarding 'All-then bring forth the like of a chapter of it." [Cf. Qur’an 2:23.]

The response to making deductions on the basis of this group of traditions [is as follows]. We have noted earlier that some revelations were in the form of an exegesis of the Qur'an, and not part of it. Consequently, these traditions that speak about the names of the Imams being part of the

revelation should be regarded in the same light. If not so regarded, then these traditions should be rejected for contradicting the Book, the Sunna (Prophetic Tradition), and other sources of proof that were pre- sented to invalidate the view about [the occurrence of] tahrif. Many uninterruptedly transmitted traditions indicate the obligation of submitting the traditions to the Book and the Sunna, and those that contradict the Book should be rejected and discarded. In addition, what proves that Amir al-Mu'minin's name was not mentioned explicitly in the Qur'an is the tradition on the subject of al-Ghadir. In this report, it is evident that the Prophet had appointed 'Ali [as his successor] on God's command, and after having received assurances in this regard, and having been promised, by God, protection from the people. Had the name of 'Ali been mentioned in the Qur'an, there would have been neither the need for this appointment nor the preparation of that well-attended gathering of Muslims. Nor would the Prophet have feared to publicize the appointment to the point that he needed divine assurance in this matter.

In short, the fact that the Ghadir tradition is sound requires us to regard as false those traditions that state that the names of the Imams are mentioned in the Qur'an. More important, the Ghadir tradition took place during the Farewell Pilgrimage, which occurred toward the end of the Prophet's life, and after the revelation of most of the Qur'an and its dissemination among Muslims. Moreover, the content of the last tradition cited above, related in al-Kafi [by al-Kulayni, on the authority of the Imam al- Baqir] cannot be true in itself. This is because mentioning the name of 'Ali (peace be upon him) is out of place in the context of proving the prophethood and challenging [the people] to bring forth the like of the Qur'an. Furthermore, the authentic tradition reported by al-Kulayni on the authority of Abu Basir, contradicts all the traditions in the second group. Abu Basir says:

I asked Abu 'Abd Allah [al-Sadiq] about the [interpretation of] what God, the Exalted, says, which is, "Obey God, and obey the Messenger and those among you who wield authority" (Qur’an 4:59). He [al Sadiq] said: "The verse was revealed concerning 'Ali b. Abi Talib, al-Hasan, and al-Husayn." So I said, "People are saying, 'How come 'Ali and his family are not [specifically] named in the Book of God?'" He said, "In that case, tell them that the salat (prayer) was revealed to the Prophet, and in it there was no [specific] mention of three or four [units] until the Prophet was the one who explained that to them."[39]

Accordingly, this sound tradition overrules all those [second-group] traditions and explains their purport-namely, that the mention of Amir al-Mu'minin's ['Ali's] name in those traditions is in the form of an exegesis or in the form of a revelation which came down [to the Prophet] without the command of conveyance, [thus not being part of the Qur'an]. In addition, those who had refused to pay allegiance to Abu Bakr did not resort to the argument that 'Ali s name was mentioned in the Qur'an. Had his name been in the Qur'an, this would have provided them with the strongest argument, especially since the collection of the Qur'an, according to those who maintain this belief, was done a considerable time after the matter of the caliphate had been decided. Indeed, this is among the clear sources of proof

establishing the absence of [specific] mention of ['Ali's] name in the verses [of the Qur'an].

Third Group of Traditions

These are the traditions which assert that alterations in the sense of addition and omission occurred in the Qur'an, and that the community after the time of the Prophet changed some words and substituted others in their place.

Among these traditions is the one reported by 'Ali b. Ibrahim al-Qummi, whose chain of transmission goes back to Hurayz, who related it on the authority of the Imam al-Sadiq He said, "[The sixth verse of 'al-Fatiha' was read as follows:] Siri'ita man an' amta 'alayhim ghayri al-maghdubi 'alayhim wa ghayri al-dallin.[40]

Another tradition is reported by al-'Ayyashi from Hisham b. Salim. He said:

I asked the Imam al-Sadiq about what God, the Exalted, says in the Qur'an, which is, "Lo! God preferred Adam and Noah and the Family of Abraham and the Family of 'Imran above [all His] creatures" (Qur’an 3:33). The Imam said, "The verse [as it was revealed] is 'The Family of Abraham and the Family of Muhammad above [all His] creatures.' Thus, they replaced one name with another; that is, they made a change and substituted 'the Family of 'Imran' for 'the Family of Muhammad.'"

The response to making deductions on the basis of this group of traditions is that, besides their dubious chains of transmission, they are in contradiction of the Book, the Sunna, and the consensus of the Muslims, including those who hold the view of tahrif. that not a single word was added to the Qur'an. A large number of religious scholars have maintained that there is a consensus that no additions have been made to the Qur'an, and that everything that is between its two covers is part of the revealed Qur'an. Among those who have asserted the existence of a consensus are al-Shaykh al-Mufid, al-Shaykh al-Tusi, al-Shaykh al-Baha'i, and other prominent scholars of Imami Shi'ism. Moreover, we already noted the traditions which cite the arguments [of 'Ali b. Abi Talib] and which indicate that no additions were made to the Qur'an.

Fourth Group of Traditions

These are the traditions which indicate that ta(lrif of the Qur'an consisted of omissions only.

The response to the arguments based on this group is that the evidence that was produced to negate any addition in the text of Amir al-Mu'minin ['Ali] is admissible in this case, too; and if that is not admissible in the cases of some of them, they must be rejected because they contradict the Book and the Sunna. In one of our teaching sessions, we discussed another response to this claim, which may be the nearest possibility to the truth of the matter, and which we have omitted here for fear of unnecessarily prolonging the discussion. We shall, however, return to this subject in another context of our discussion.

Moreover, most of these traditions, or, rather, the majority of them, are of weak transmission, and some of them are not even plausible in their content.

It is for this reason that many renowned scholars have declared that these traditions should necessarily be either interpreted allegorically or rejected.

Among those who expressed this opinion was al-Muhaqqiq al-Kalbasi, when, as reported by others, he said:

The traditions that speak about tahrif are against the consensus of all the community except for those of them whose opinion has no value. . . . Moreover, the claim that there have been omissions in the Book has no basis of truth; otherwise, it would have attained fame and uninterrupted transmission, as usually happens in the case of major events. . . . And this is one of them, or, rather, the most important.

This opinion was also expressed by al-Muhaqqiq al-Baghdadi , a commentator of al-Wafiya, who wrote a separate treatise on this subject. In the latter work, he says, "Those traditions that indicate the occurrence of omission [in the Qur'an] should necessarily be allegorically interpreted or rejected. Certainly, if a tradition contradicts the proof provided by the Book, the uninterruptedly narrated Sunna, and the consensus, and if, further, it is not possible to interpret it allegorically, or to explain it in one way or another, then it must be rejected."

In this, al-Muhaqqiq al-Karaki is in agreement with what we mentioned earlier in this work, to the effect that the uninterruptedly transmitted traditions demonstrate that if a tradition is in contradiction of the Qur'an, it should be abandoned. Among such traditions is the one related by Ibn Babawayh al Sadiq, with a sound chain of transmission going back to the Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him). He said:

When one encounters obscurity, it is better to pause than to plunge into perdition, because above every truth there is a greater verity [that supports it], and above every correctness there is a light [that leads to it]. Thus, whatever agrees with the Book of God, adopt it, and whatever contradicts the Book of God, discard it.[41]

Another such tradition has been related by Sa'id b. Hibat Allah al-Qutb al-Rawandi, whose authentic chain of transmission also goes back to the Imam al-SadiQur’an He said:

When two contradictory traditions come to you, then compare [their contents] with the Book of God. Whatever agrees with the Book of God, accept it, and whatever disagrees with the Book of God, reject it.[42]

The Fourth Error

This error deals with the way the Qur'an was collected, and the manner in which alterations occurred during this process. Since we are going to discuss the collection of the Qur'an in the next chapter we shall clarify this error there.

Notes

1. Kulayni, al-Kafi, as cited by Muhammad b. Murtaqa Fayd al-Kashi [Kashani], Kitab al-Wafi, 15 vols. (Tehran: KitabfurushI Islamiyyha, al-Maktabat al-lslamiyya, n.d.), vol. 5 (Toward the End of Kitab al-Salat), p. 274.

2. See chapter 6 for the statements of these scholars

3. Kashi, al-Wafi, vol. 5, p. 274; Kashi, 'Ilm al-Yaqin, 2 vols. (n.p., n.d.) vol. 2, p. 545

4. Al-Balaghi discusses this question in the introduction to his exegesis Ala'al Rahman. See Rafi'I, I'jaz al-Qur'an, p42.. See Rafi'i, I'jaz al-Qur'an, p. 42

5. This refers to the burning of the noncanonical codices, which was ordered by Caliph 'Uthman when his official codex was prepared.- Trans

6. Rafi'i, I'jaz al-Qur'an, p. 42.

7. Bukhari, Sahih, vol. 8, p. 26; Muslim, Sahih, vol. 5, p. 116, without any addition following inna

8. Suyuti, al-Itqan, vol. 1, sec. 18, pp. 167-68

9. Ibid., sec. 19, p. 198

10. Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad al-Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal wa bi-Hamishihi Muntakhab Kanz al- 'Ummal fi Sinan al-Aqwal wa al-Af'al, 6 vols. (Beirut: Dar Sadir, n.d.) vol. 1, p. 47

11. Suyuti, al-Itqan, vol. 2, pp. 40-41.

12. Ibid

13. Qur'an 33:56, but the italicized phrase is not in the present text.-Trans

14. Ibid

15. Muslim, Sahih, vol. 3, p. 100

16. Ibn 'Abd al-Muttaqi, Muntakhab Kanz al- 'Ummal, vol. 2, p. 43

17. Ibn 'Abd al-Muttaqi, Muntakhab Kanz al- 'Ummal, vol. 2, p. 50

18. Muslim, Sahih, vol. 4, p. 167. This verse does not occur, in either reading, in the present text of the Qur'an.-Trans

19. . Suyuti, al-Itqan, vol. 2, p. 42

20. Ibid

21. Ibid, vol. 1, pp. 112-13

22. Ibrahim b. Musa al-Shatibi, al-Muwafaqat fi Usull al-Sharia, 2d ed., ed. Muhammad 'Abd Allah Darraz, 4 vols (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi, 1975), vol. 3, p. 106

23. 'Ali b. Abi 'Ali al-Amidi, al-lhkam fi Usul al-Ahkam, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maktaba wa Matba'at Muhammad 'Ali Sabih, 1968), vol. 3, p. 272.

24. Ibid., p. 263.

25. Mahmud b. 'Abd Allah al-Alusi, Ruh al-Ma'ani fi Tafsir al-Qur'an al- Azim wa al-Sab 'Mathani,ed. Muhammad Zuhri al-Najjar, 30 vols. in 15 (Beirut: Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 197), vol. 1, p. 32

26. Al-Fadl b. al-Hasan al-Tabarsi, Majma 'al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, 5 vols. (Qumm: Maktabat Ayat Allah al-'Uzma al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi), vol. 1, p. 15

27. .Normally, according to Shi'ite law, the "Fatiha" and a complete short sura are recited in the first two cycles of the prayer. It is permissible, however, to use part of one or two suras after the "Fatiha." In such a case, only certain verses are used; hence the expression Salat al- ayat [prayer with verses].- Trans

28. . Majlisi, Bihar, vol. 37, p. 290

29. See Al-Sharif al-Radi Muhammad b. al-Husayn, comp., Nahj al-Balagha, ed. Muhammad Abu al-Fadl Ibrahim, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, 1963) vol.I, pp. 51-52, concerning the taking back of the land grants that were given by 'Uthman to the Muslims

30. Al-Hajjaj b. Yusuf al-Thaqafi was one of the most important generals in the restoration of Umayyad rule in 691-92, and, later, governor of Iraq for the Umayyad caliphs 'Abd al-Malik and al-Walid.-Trans.

31. Zurqani, Manahil al-'Irfan, p. 257

32. . Majlisi, Bihar, vol. 8, p. 4. Sunni sources have been cited above

33. . Tirmidhi, Sahih, vol. 3, pp. 321-22

34. Introduction to Tafsir al-Burhan, p. 27. In this tradition, it is explicitly maintained that whatever is in the present text of the Qur'an is all of the Qur'an

35. Muhammad b. Murtada al-Fayd al-Kashani, Tafsir al-Safi, ed. Husayn al-A'Iami, 5 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lami, 1979-82) vol. 1, p. 42

36. Kashi, al-Wafi, vol. 2, sec. 76, p. 130

37. Ibid

38. The people intended here are probably the Mekkan Confederates (ahzab), who are mentioned in Qur'an 33:20-22.- Trans.

39. Kashi, al-Wafi, sec. 30, p. 63

40. Qur'an 1:7-"The path of those whom You have favored, not of those who earn Your anger, nor of those who go astray." The alteration consists of two minor changes in pronouns.- Trans.

41. Hurr al-'Amili, al-Wasa'il, vol. 18, p. 84

42. Ibid.

8. The Collection of the Qur'an

Synopsis: The way the Qur'an was collected; a review of the traditions about the collection of the Qur'an; their contrariety and inconsistency; their discord with those accounts that indicate that the Qur'an was collected during the lifetime of the Prophet; their incongruity when compared with the Book and the intellect; their disagreement with the consensus of the Muslims that the Qur'an cannot be established except through its uninterrupted [transmission]; using these traditions as evidence necessitates maintaining the belief in tahrif [in the sense of] addition, whose invalidity has been accepted [by all the scholars].

The manner in which the Qur'an was collected is among the issues that have been used by those who maintain the belief in tahrif (alteration) to prove that there has been tahrif [in the sense of the corruption of the text] as well as taghyir (change) in the Qur'an, and that the very manner of the Qur'an's collection would, in the normal course of events, involve this corruption and change in it. Hence, it is imperative that the discussion [in this chapter] should be undertaken in order to complete the treatment of the subject regarding the protection of the Qur'an from corruption and its freedom from omission or any alteration.

The source of this error [about tahrif] is the claim that the Qur'an was collected under Abu Bakr's order, following the slaying of seventy reciters of the Qur'an at the battle of Bi'r Ma'una, and of four hundred persons at the battle of Yamama. Fearing that the Qur'an would be lost and would disappear from the people, 'Umar and Zayd

Thabit undertook to collect it from fragments written on palm branches, flat stones, and pieces of wood, and from the breasts of the people [who had memorized it], provided that two witnesses would testify that what they [reported] was part of the Qur'an. All this has been suggested in a number of accounts. Ordinarily, it is expected that some of it would be lost to those who assumed the responsibility for this task, except if they were infallible [and divinely protected from forgetting]. This can be witnessed among those who undertake to collect the poetry of one or more poets, when this poetry is scattered. This rule is inevitable and arises from habit. The least that we can expect is that alteration has occurred, for it is possible to fail in the effort to find two witnesses on some [revelation] that was heard from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny). Hence, there can be no certainty that omission did not occur.

The response [to this is as follows]. This erroneous view is based on [accepting] the soundness of the traditions that report the manner of collecting the Qur'an. So, the first task is to relate these traditions and follow them up with a critical evaluation.

Traditions about the Collection of the Qur'an

1. This tradition has been narrated by Zayd b. Thabit. He said:

Abu Bakr sent for me when the Muslims were slain in the battle of Yamama. [When I entered, I found] 'Umar b. al-Khattab with him. Abu Bakr said, "'Umar came to me and said, 'Casualties were heavy among Qur'an reciters during the battle of Yamama, and I am afraid that heavier

casualties might take place among the reciters in other battles, whereby much of the Qur'an would be lost. I am of the opinion that you should order the collection of the Qur'an [in book form].'" I asked 'Umar, "How dare I do something the Messenger of God did not do?" 'Umar replied, "This, by God, is a good thing [to do]." 'Umar kept urging me until God opened my chest for that and I came to view the matter as he did. Zayd said that Abu Bakr said [to him]: "You are a wise young man and we trust you. You used to record the revelation for the Messenger of God. So go and find [all the fragments ot] the Qur'an and put them together."

By God, had they required me [Zayd] to move a mountain, it could not have been heavier for me than their order to collect the Qur'an. So I said, "How dare I do something that the Messenger of God did not do?" Abu Bakr persisted in repeating his demand until God opened my chest for that, as He had done for Abu Bakr and 'Umar. Thereupon, I traced the Qur'an, collecting it from palm branches, flat stones, and the breasts of the people [who had memorized it], until I found the last part of "Surat al- Tawba" in the possession of Abu Khuzayma al-AnarI, having found it with no one else-"There has come to you a messenger, [one] of yourselves, to whom aught that you are overburdened is grievous, full of concern for you; for the believers, full of pity, merciful. Now, if they tum away (O Muhammad], say, "God suffices me. There is no God save Him. In Him have I put my trust and He is Lord of the Tremendous Throne" (Qur'an 9: 128-129)-till the end of the sura. The scrolls (subuf) remained with Abu Bakr until he died, then with 'Umar till the end of his life, and then with Hafsa, 'Umar's daughter.[1]

2. Ibn Shihab [al-Zuhri] relates that Anas b. Malik told him:

Hudhayfa b. al-Yaman went before 'Uthman. He had recently led the people of Syria and Iraq in the conquest of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Hudhayfa was alarmed by the dispute between them over the reading [of the Qur'an]. Thus, Hudhayfa said to 'Uthman, "O Commander of the Faithful, save this community before it falls in dispute over the Book, as the Jews and the Christians [before them] have done." So 'Uthman sent [a message] to Hafsa: "Send us the scrolls [which were in her possession], so that they can be copied into codices (masahif) and then returned to you." Hafsa sent them to 'Uthman, who ordered Zayd b. Thabit, 'Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr, Sa'id b. al'a. and 'Abd al-Rahman b. al-Harith b. Hisham to copy them into codices. [Then] 'Uthman told the three Qurayshi men, "Whenever you disagree with Zayd b. Thabit on any point of the Qur'an, write it in the dialect of the Quraysh, for it was revealed in their tongue." They followed [these guidelines]. When they had finished copying the sheets into codices, 'Uthman returned the sheets to Hafsa, and sent to each province one of the codices they had copied, and ordered the burning of all other Qur'anic material, whether in fragmentary manuscripts or full codices.

Ibn Shihab went on to say:

Kharija b. Zayd b. Thabit informed me that he heard [his father] Zayd say: "I missed a verse from the [Surat] al-Ahzab when we copied the Qur'an, and I used to hear the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny) reciting it. We looked for it and found it with Khuzayma b. Thabit

al-Anari. [This was the following verse]: 'Among the believers are those persons who are truthful when they promise God about something' (Qur'an 33:23). Thus, we inserted it in the proper place in the sura."[2]

3. A tradition has been related by AbI Shayba, with a chain of transmission going back to 'Ali b. Abi Talib. He said, 'The greatest credit for collecting the Qur'anic text goes to Abu Bakr, for he was the first to collect that which is between the two covers."

4. A tradition was related by Ibn Shihab on the authority of Salim b. 'Abd Allah and Kharija:

Abu Bakr al-Siddiq collected the Qur'an in sheets (qaratis). He asked Zayd b. Thabit to scrutinize them. But Zayd refused to do so until Abu Bakr sought 'Umar's help in persuading him, and Zayd agreed. The books (kutub) remained in Abu Baker's keeping until he died. Thereafter, they were kept with Hafsa, the Prophet's wife. 'Uthman sent her [a message to hand them over to him]. But she refused to do so until he promised her that he would return them to her. So she sent them to him. 'Uthman copied these sheets into codices and returned [the originals) to her. They continued to be in her keeping . . . .

5. Hisham b. 'Urwa related a tradition on the authority of his father. He said:

When the Muslims were slain in Yamama, Abu Bakr ordered 'Umar b. al-Khattab and Zayd b. Thabit to sit at the entrance of the mosque. He said: "Anyone who comes to you with anything from the Qur'an that you do not recognize, but is witnessed by two men accept it. This was because a large number of the Companions of the Prophet who had memorized the Qur'an had been killed in Yamama."

6. Muhammad b. Sirin reported that the Qur'an was not yet collected in one volume when 'Umar was assassinated.

7. Al-Hasan related:

'Umar b. al-Khattab inquired about a verse of the Book of God. He was informed that it was in the possession of a person who was slain in the battle of Yamama. On hearing this, he recited the verse expressing loss-"We belong to God"-and ordered the collection of the Qur'an, and thus was the first to collect it in a codex (mushaf).

8. Yahya b. 'Abd al-Rahman b. Hatib related the following tradition:

'Umar decided to collect the Qur'an. So he stood before the people [in the mosque] and said, "Whoever received any part of the Qur'an [directly] from the Messenger of God, he is to bring it to us." They had written these [parts] on sheets, tablets, and palm branches. He would not accept anything from anyone until two witnesses testified [to its authenticity]. He was assassinated while still engaged in his collection. Then 'Uthman got up [for the sermon in the mosque] and said, "Whoever has any part of the Book of God is to bring it here to us." 'Uthman would not accept anything from anyone until two witnesses testified. Khuzayma b. Thabit came to them and said, "I see that you have left out two verses, having not written them." They asked what they were, and he said, "I received these direct from the Prophet: 'There has come to you a messenger, [one] of yourselves . . .' [Qur'an 9: 128]" to the end of the sura. 'Uthman said, "And I bear witness that these

verses come from God." He asked Khuzayma: "Where do you think we should place them?" He replied, "Put them at the end of the last revelation of the Qur'an." Thus, "Surat al-Bara'a" was closed with these.

9. A tradition was reported by 'Ubayd b. 'Umayr:

'Umar would not include a verse in the codex except if two men had testified [to its being part of the Qur'an]. A man from the Helpers (ansar) came to him with these two verses: "There has come to you a messenger, [one] of yourselves . . ." to the end of the sura. 'Umar forthwith said, "I shall not ask you for evidence at all, for the Prophet was indeed like that."

10. A tradition was related by Sulayman b. Arqam on the authority of al-Hasan and Ibn Sirin, and by Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri. They said:

When the death toll among the reciters rose in the battle of Yamama-four hundred of them fell on that day-Zayd b. Thabit met with 'Umar b. al-Khattab and said to him: "This Qur'an is what unites our religion; if the Qur'an goes, so does our religion. Hence, I have resolved to collect the Qur'an in a book." 'Umar said to him, "Wait until I ask Abu Bakr." Thus, they both went to see Abu Bakr and informed him about the situa- tion. He said, "Do not be in haste until I consult the Muslims." Then he delivered an oration to the Muslims, informing them about the grave situation [caused by the Yamama slaughter]. They said, "You are right." So they collected the Qur'an. Abu Bakr ordered a crier to call out among the people and ask them to bring forward any part of the Qur'an that might have. . . .

11. Khuzayma b. Thabit related the following incident:

I brought the verse "There has come to you a messenger, [one] of yourselves . . ." to 'Umar b. al-Khattab and Zayd b. Thabit. Zayd asked, "Who will testify with you [to its authenticity]?" I said, "By God, I do not know." Thereupon, 'Umar said: "I bear witness with him on [its being from the Qur'an]."

12. Abu Ishaq related the following on the authority of some of his associates:

When 'Umar collected the text, he asked, "Who is the greatest master of Arabic among the people?" He was told that it was Sa'id b. al-'As. He went on to inquire, "Who is the best scribe among the people?" He was told that it was Zayd b. Thabit. So he said, "Let Sa'id dictate and Zayd write it down." Thus, they made four copies of the text, and dispatched a copy each to Kufa, Basra, al-Sham (Syria), and Hijaz.

13. The following tradition was reported by 'Abd Allah b. Faddala:

When 'Umar decided to collect the first complete version (al-imam) of the Qur'an, he appointed some of his associates to represent him, and said, "Whenever you disagree on a point of language, write in the dialect of the Muqar, because the Qur'an was revealed to a man of Mudar."

14. Abu Qullaba related the following:

During the caliphate of 'Uthman, different teachers were teaching different readings [of the Qur'an] to their students. Thus, it used to happen that the students would meet and disagree. The matter reached a point that they would take their dispute to the teachers, who would then condemn each other's [variant] readings. This situation reached 'Uthman's ears. He delivered an oration saying: "You are here by me, yet you disagree on the

reading and pronunciation of the Qur'an. Therefore, those who are far away from me in the provinces must be in a greater dispute, making greater grammatical errors. O Companions of Muhammad, come together and write a complete version (imam) [of the Qur'an] for the Muslims."

Abu Qullaba added:

Malik b. Anas (who, according to Abu Bakr b. Abi Dawud, was the grandfather of [Imam] Malik b. Anas) reported to me: "I was among those to whom the Qur'an was dictated. Sometimes they would disagree on a verse. Then they would remember a person who had received it from the Messenger of God, and who would happen to be absent or out in the valleys. In such a situation, they would write the verses that come before and after it, and would leave a place for it, until that person had returned or was summoned. When the text was completed [in this way], 'Uthman wrote to the people in the provinces that 'I have done such and such a thing [in copying the text] and I have destroyed the other material that I have, and you should destroy the other material you have.'"

15. A tradition has been related by Mus'ab b. Sa'd:

'Uthman stood up to make the sermon to the people. He said: "O people, it is now thirteen years since our Prophet left you, and you are still wrangling about the Qur'an. You refer to the reading of Ubayy and that of 'Abd Allah, and some of you [go as far as to] say, 'By God, your ['Uthman's] reading is not in order!' I therefore summon every one of you to bring forward any part of the Book of God that you have in your possession." Thus, people would come with parchments and scraps of leather with [parts of] the Qur'an on them, until there accumulated a large number of them. After this was done, 'Uthman came in and called them one by one, and implored each to say whether he heard [a part of the Qur'an] from the Messenger of God or whether it was dictated to him by the Messenger. They would answer in the affirmative. When this was done, 'Uthman said, "Who is the best scribe among you?" They said, "The scribe of the Prophet, Zayd b. Thabit." Then he asked, "Who is the greatest master of Arabic?" They said, "Sa'id b. al-'As." 'Uthman said, "In that case, let Sa'id dictate and Zayd write."

Hence, Zayd wrote down [the text], and ['Uthman] prepared the codices and distributed them among the people.

I [Mus'ab] heard one of the Companions of the Prophet say, "He ['Uthman] did well [by undertaking the task]."

16. Abu al-Malih has reported that "when 'Uthman b. 'Affan decided to write down the text of the Qur'an, he said, 'Let [a man from] the Hudhayl dictate and [a man from] the Thaqif write.'"

17. 'Abd al-A'la b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Amir al-Qarashi related:

When the codex was completed, it was brought to 'Uthman. He examined it and said, "You have done well and you have acted decently. I see minor grammatical mistakes the Arabs would correct with their tongues [i.e., through proper recitation]."

18. 'Ikrima related:

When 'Uthman was brought the [completed] codex, he noticed minor grammatical errors in it. So he said, "Had the one dictating been from the

[tribe of] Hudhayl and the scribe from the [tribe of] Thaqif, such an error would not have crept into the text."

19. 'Ata' related:

When 'Uthman b. 'Affan decided to copy the Qur'an into codices, he sent them to Ubayy b. Ka'b. Ubayy used to dictate to Zayd b. Thabit, who used to write, and with them was Sa'id b. al-'As,who used to vocalize the text [in accordance with the rules of Arabic grammar]. This text was according to the reading of Ubayy and Zayd.

20. Mujahid reported, "'Uthman ordered Ubayy b. Ka'b to dictate, Zayd b. Thabit to write, [and] Sa'id b. al-'As and 'Abd al-Rahman b. al-Harith to vocalize [the Qur'an] in accordance with the rules of Arabic."

21. Zayd b. Thabit reported:

When we copied the codices, a verse was missing which I used to hear from the Messenger of God. I found it in possession of Khuzayma b. Thabit. [This was]: "Among the believers are persons who are truthful in what they promise to God . . ." [Qur’an 33:23]. Khuzayma was nicknamed "He of the Two Testimonies" because the Messenger permitted his testimony to be equal to that of two persons.

22. Ibn Ashatta reported the following tradition on the authority of al-Layth b. Sa'd:

The first to collect the Qur'an was Abu Bakr, and it was written by Zayd. The people used to bring what they had [of the Qur'an] to Zayd b. Thabit, who would not write a verse without two righteous persons testifying [to its authenticity]. The last part of "Surat al-Bara' a" [sura 9] was not found except in the keeping of Khuzayma b. Thabit. [Abu Bakr] said: "Write it down. The Messenger of God made Khuzayma's testimony equal to that of two witnesses. Thus, Zayd wrote it down. However, 'Umar brought the stoning verse, but we did not write it down because he was alone [in reporting it]."[3]

These are the most significant traditions that have been related about the manner in which the Qur'an was collected. Quite aside from being reported by single narrations, and therefore inspiring no confidence, they also are defective in other aspects.

Inconsistency of the Traditions Regarding the Collection of the Qur'an

The traditions contradict each other and, therefore, it is not possible to trust anything in them. It is worth mentioning a number of these contradictions by raising certain questions and answering them.

a. When was the Qur'an collected into a single codex? The apparent sense of tradition 2, [cited above], suggests that the collection was undertaken during the time of 'Uthman (644-656). The clear statement of traditions 1, 3, and 4, and the apparent sense of a few others, indicate is that it was undertaken during Abu Bakr's time. The clear statement of traditions 7 and 12 indicates that it was during 'Umar' s time (634-644).

b. Who undertook the task of collecting the Qur'an during Abu Bakr's time? According to traditions 1 and 22, the person who undertook this task was Zayd b. Thabit, whereas, according to tradition 4, it was Abu Bakr

himself, and he asked Zayd only to examine what he had collected from the sheets (kutub). On the other hand, tradition 5, as well as the apparent sense of some other reports, suggest that it was both 'Umar and Zayd who undertook the task.

c. Was Zayd delegated to choose which verses would be included in the Qur'an? It appears from tradition 1, or, in fact, it is clear, that Abu Bakr delegated the task to him. What 'Umar said to Zayd is clear in this regard: "You are a wise young man and we trust you. You used to record the revelation for the Messenger of God. So go and find [all the fragments of] the Qur'an and put them together." Tradition 5 and a few others mention that the material was included in the text only on the testimony of [at least] two witnesses, to the extent that when 'Umar came forward with the verse regarding the stoning, it was not accepted from him because he was the only one reporting it.

d. Did any verse remain unrecorded until the time of 'Uthman? The apparent sense of many traditions -in fact, their explicit statement-suggests that there was nothing left out until that time. However, tradition 2 clearly states that some verses had been left out and were not recorded until the time of 'Uthman.

e. Did 'Uthman strike out anything that was recorded before him? The apparent sense of many traditions, or, rather, their explicit statement, suggests that 'Uthman did not strike out anything from the text recorded before him. But tradition 14 explicitly states that he did strike out something that was recorded before him, and that he ordered the Muslims to do the same.

f. From what source did 'Uthman collect the codex? Traditions 2 and 4 state explicitly that in collecting the Qur'an he depended on the scrolls (suhuf) collected by Abu Bakr. In contrast, traditions 8, 14, and 15 explicitly state that 'Uthman collected it on the [basis of the] testimony of two witnesses, and from the reports of those who had heard the verse from the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny).

g. Who asked Abu Bakr to collect the Qur'an? Tradition I says that it was 'Umar who asked him, and Abu Bakr agreed with him after initially refusing to do [the collection]. He then sent for Zayd and asked him to undertake the task. Zayd also agreed with him after initially refusing to do it. Tradition 10 mentions that both Zayd and 'Umar asked Abu Bakr to do it, and that he agreed with them after consulting the Muslims.

h. Who collected the first complete version (imam) of the Qur'an and sent copies of it to the different centers of the empire? Tradition 2 states clearly that it was 'Uthman, whereas tradition 12 also states clearly that it was 'Umar.

i. When were the two last verses of "Surat al-Bara'a" appended? Traditions 1, 11, and 22 state clearly that they were appended during Abu Bakr's time. In contrast, the clear statement of tradition 8 and the apparent sense of other traditions suggest that this was done during 'Umar's time.

j. Who came forward with these two verses? Traditions 1 and 22 state clearly that it was Abu Khuzayma. However, traditions 8 and 11 also state

clearly that it was Khuzayma b. Thabit. As mentioned by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, there is no relationship whatsoever between these two men.[4]

k. How was it established that these two verses were from the Qur'an? From the apparent sense of the first tradition, and from the clear statement of traditions 9 and 21, it was established on the testimony of a single person. According to the clear statement of number 8, 'Uthman testified [as a second witness] with him; and according to the clear statement of number 11, 'Umar was the one who testified [as a second witness] with him.

l. Whom did 'Uthman appoint to write the Qur'an and to dictate it? Tradition 2 states explicitly that 'Uthman appointed Zayd, Ibn al-Zubayr, Sa'id, and 'Abd al-Rahman for writing, whereas number 15 states explicitly that he appointed Zayd for writing and Sa'id for dictating. Tradition 16, however, asserts that he appointed a person from the tribe of Thaqif to write, and another from the tribe of Hudhayl to dictate. But tradition 18 states clearly that the writer was not from the Thaqif, and that the one who dictated was not from the Hudhayl. Tradition 19 states explicitly that the person who dictated was Ubayy b. Ka'b, and that Sa'id b. al-'As vocalized what Zayd wrote, in accordance with the rules of Arabic grammar. This is asserted also by tradition 20, with the addition of 'Abd al-Rahman b. al-Harith to oversee the vocalization with Sa'id.

The Contradiction among the Traditions in Their Account of the Collection of the Qur 'an

All these traditions are contradicted by information that indicates that the Qur'an was collected and recorded during the lifetime of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny). This information has been transmitted by a number of people, including Ibn Abi Shayba, Ibn Habban, al-Hakim, al-Bayhaqi, and al-Qiya' al-Maqdisi, all reporting on the authority of lbn 'Abbas, who said:

I asked 'Uthman b. 'Affan: "What made you turn to 'Surat al-Anfal' [sura 8, "The Spoils"], which is one of the mathani suras,[5] and to 'Surat al-Bara'a' [sura 9], which is one of the mi'in suras,[6] and put them next to each other without writing between them the basmala invocation [In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate]? What made you do that?" 'Uthman replied: "There were times when [long] suras with numerous [verses] used to come down to the Messenger of God. And when something was revealed to him, he would call for one of those who used to transcribe for him and say, 'Include these verses in the sura in which this and that is mentioned.' More verses would come down to him and he would say: 'Include these in the sura in which this and that is mentioned.' 'Al-Anfal' was among the first of the revelations in Medina, and 'al-Bara'a was among the last revelations of the Qur'an. The contents of 'al-Bara' a' resembled those of 'al-Anfal,' so I assumed that it belonged to it. The Prophet died without clarifying for us that it was part of it. It is for this reason that I put them together without writing the line bism Allah al-Rahman, al-Rahim [i.e., the basmala], and I placed them among the seven long suras."[7]

In another tradition, related by al-Tabarani and Ibn 'Asakir, al-Sha'bi says:

The Qur'an was collected, during the lifetime of the Messenger of God, by six individuals from the Ansar (Helpers): Ubayy b. Ka'b, Zayd b. Thabit, Mu'adh b. Jabal, Abu al-Darda', Sa'd b. 'Ubayd, and Abu Zayd. Moreover, Majma' b. Jariya had col- lected [all of the] Qur'an except for two or three suras.[8]

Qatadah reports the following:

I asked Anas b. Malik, "Who collected the Qur'an during the lifetime of the Prophet?" He replied, "Four persons, all of them from theAniir (Helpers): Ubayy b. Ka'b, Mu'adh b. Jabal, Zayd b. Thabit, and Abu Zayd."[9]

According to Masruq, one day 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar remembered 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud, and said, "I continue to love him. I heard the Prophet say, 'Learn the Qur'an from four: 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud, Salim, Mu'adh, and Ubayy b. Ka'b.'"[10]

Al-Nasa'i reports a tradition with a sound chain of transmission going back to 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar, who said, "I collected the Qur'an and I used to read [all of] it every night. The Prophet came to know about it and told me: 'Read it in a month . . . .'"[11] We shall presently cite the tradition from Ibn Sa'd regarding the collection of the Qur'an by Umm Waraqa.

It is possible to argue that the notion of collection (jam) in the aforementioned traditions implies collection in the memory and not in recording (tadwin) the revelation in a volume. However, such an assertion rests on no evidence. Additionally, during the Prophet's time, more people than could be counted memorized the text of the Qur'an. How then could they be limited to four or six persons, as these traditions do? Anyone who has examined the history of the Companions and the Prophet would know with certainty that the Qur'an existed in the form of a complete collection during the Prophet's time, and that the number of people engaged in collecting it was fairly sizable. However, as for the tradition related by al-Bukhari on the authority of Anas, which says that the Prophet died and no one had collected the Qur'an except four-Abu Darda', Mu'adh b. Jabal, Zayd b. Thabit, and Abu Zayd-it has to be rejected and discarded because it contradicts all the preceding traditions, including those reported by al-Bukhari himself. Moreover, this tradition is hard to believe, for how could Anas, the narrator of the report, have information about every individual Muslim at the time of the Prophet's death-they were large in number and spread out in the region-to enable him to limit the persons who collected the Qur'an to four? This assertion is nothing more than a conjecture about the unknown and an opinion without knowledge. To recapitulate, in view of the abovementioned traditions regarding the Qur'an's existence in the collected form during the Prophet's time, how can one believe that Abu Bakr was the first to collect it after assuming the caliphate? If we do accept the validity of such a claim, then the question arises as to why he ordered Zayd and 'Umar to collect it from palm branches, flat stones, and the memories of men? Why did he not take it from 'Abd Allah, Mu'adh, and Ubayy, who were alive at the time of the collection, and who, along with Salim, were, according to the Prophet's instructions, the persons from whom the Qur'an should be acquired? Itis true that Salim had been killed in the battle of Yamama, and thus the Qur'an could not be acquired from him. Nevertheless, Zayd, as it

appears from this tradition, himself was one of the compilers of the Qur'an. As such, there was no need to look for, or ask, someone else, especially as he was a wise and trusted man, as Abu Bakr himself said. Besides all these points, the tradition about the "two things of high estimation" (thaqalayn) indicates that the Qur'an existed as a complete collection during the Prophet's time, as we shall explain further below.

The Contrariety of the Collection Traditions to the Book of God

These traditions are evidently contrary to the Qur'an. For many verses of the Noble Book demonstrate that the suras of the Qur'an were distinct in form and content from each other, and were widely spread among the people, including the idolaters of Mekka and the people of the Book. Significantly, the Prophet had challenged the unbelievers and idolaters to produce the like of the Qur'an, and the like of ten suras from it, and even one sura. This means that the suras of the Qur'an were available to them.

Numerous verses apply the word al-kitab (the Book) to the Qur'an. Moreover, in the famous tradition of al-thaqalayn, the Prophet says, "I leave among you two things of high estimation: the Book of God and my Family." In this tradition there is evidence that the Qur'an had been collected and written, because it is not correct to call it al-kitab when it is merely in the [people's] memories. Indeed, it is even inappropriate to apply the word al-kitab to the fragments written on palm branches, flat stones, and shoulder blades, except when such an application is figurative and from particular attention. But a word may not be used metaphorically without something to indicate that. The word al-kitab obviously signifies a single and united entity. It is not applied to a text which is scattered and not collected, let alone [one which is] still unwritten and preserved only in the memories.

The Contrariety of the Collection Traditions to Rational Judgment

These traditions are also contrary to rational judgment. Undoubtedly, the greatness of the Qur'an in itself, the measures taken by the Prophet to memorize it and recite it, the importance attached by Muslims to the measures taken by the Prophet, and the divine reward they will get for that-all these factors go against the collection of the Qur'an in the way it is described in these traditions. There are numerous aspects to the Qur'an, any one of which would be sufficient cause for the Qur'an to be a subject of attention for Muslims, and a reason for its popularity, even among children and women, let alone men. These aspects are [the following]:

1. The eloquence of the Qur'an: The Arabs used to attach much importance to the memorization of eloquent speeches, and for this reason they used to memorize the pre-Islamic poetry and speeches. Thus, how would they fail to memorize the Qur'an, which challenged all the eloquent speakers with its eloquence, and silenced all the articulate speakers with its expressive language. Indeed, all the Arabs had turned toward it, regardless of whether they were believers [in it] or unbelievers. The believer memorized it because of his faith, and the unbeliever did so because he aspired to counter it and invalidate its evidential character.

2. The Prophet's expression of his desire to memorize it and to protect it: He had special power and authority in the community, and customarily, when the leader expresses his desire to protect a book or to read it, that book would become wide-spread among the subjects who wish to gain his pleasure for the sake of religious or worldly gain.

3. Memorization of the Qur'an was a cause for raising the stature of a person among the people and gaining their respect. Those who are well informed about history know that the readers and the memorizers of the Qur'an enjoyed enormous prominence and great prestige among the people. This was one of the most powerful reasons for the people to have an interest in memorizing the Qur'an, either in its entirety, or any portion of it possible.

4. Requital and reward [in the hereafter] accrued to the reader and memorizer of the Qur'an for reciting and preserving it.

These are the most important factors that induced the people to memorize and to safeguard the Qur'an. The Muslims attached great importance to the Qur'an and safeguarded it more than their own selves, or their wealth and their children. It has been related that a number of women collected the entire Qur'an. Ibn Sa'd, in his al-Tabaqat relates the following narrative:

Al-Faql b. Dakin informed us, al-Walid b. 'Abd Allah b. Jami' related to us, saying: "My grandmother told me about Umm Waraqa bint 'Abd Allah b. al-Harith, whom the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny) used to visit and call a martyr (shahada), and she used to collect the Qur'an. When the Messenger of God was about to leave for the battle of Badr, she said to him, 'Do you allow me to come' out with you to nurse your wounded and take care of your sick? Maybe God would lead me to martyrdom (shahada).' The Prophet replied, 'Indeed, God has planned martyrdom for you through your collection of the Qur'an.'"[12]

If this was the case with women in the matter of the collection of the Qur'an, what would be the case with the men? A large number of those who memorized the Qur'an during the Prophet's time are cited in the sources. Thus, al-Qurtubi writes: "Seventy Qur'an reciters were killed during the battle of Yamama, and a similar number had been killed during the Prophet's time at Bi'r Ma'una." [13]

In tradition 10, cited above, it was mentioned that the reciters who were killed in the battle of Yamama numbered four hundred. Moreover, the importance that was attached by the Prophet to the Qur'an-in fact, he had many scribes, particularly since the Qur'an was revealed gradually in twenty-three years-impels us to conclude with certainty that the Prophet had ordered the writing of the Qur'an during his lifetime. To this effect, Zayd b. Thabit reported, "We used to record the Qur'an from parchments in the presence of the Messenger of God." And, about this tradition, al-Hakim says: "According to the rules set by the two shaykhs [al-Bukhari and Muslim], this tradition is sound, although they have not mentioned it. Hence, this tradition provides clear evidence that the Qur'an was collected during the Prophet's time."[14]

As for memorization of some suras or part of a sura, this was very common. In fact, there was rarely a Muslim man or woman who did not do that. 'Ubada b. al- Samit reports:

The Messenger of God used to be busy. Thus, when any person immigrated and came to the Messenger, he would send him to one of us to teach him the Qur'an." [15]

Kulayb related:

I was with 'Ali (peace be upon him). He heard the voices of those who were reciting the Qur'an in the mosque. At that he said, "Blessed be those. . . ."[16]

In another tradition, 'Ubada b. al-Samit says:

When a person used to migrate [to Medina], the Messenger of God used to turn him over to one of us to teach him the Qur'an. Thus, the mosque of the Messenger of God used to reverberate with the sounds of recitation of the Qur'an, until the Messenger of God ordered them to lower their voices so as not to make errors." [17]

It can be maintained with certainty that memorization of the Qur'an, however partially, was prevalent among Muslim men and women, to the extent that a Muslim woman used to make her bridal gift [i.e., she accepted her husband's teaching her as being the bridal gift to which she was entitled] teaching her a sura or more from the Qur'an.[18] In the light of all this interest, how is it possible to say that the collection of the Qur'an was delayed until the caliphate of Abu Bakr, and that Abu Bakr, in collecting the Qur'an, needed to have, [for every fragment], two witnesses who would testify that they had heard it from the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny)?

The Contrariety of the Collection Traditions to the Consensus (Ijma') of the Community

These traditions contradict the consensus of all Muslims that the Qur'an cannot be established except through an uninterrupted and successive narration from the Prophet himself. The traditions say that the verses of the Qur'an, at the time of their being collected, could be established only through the testimony of two witnesses, or through the testimony of one witness if his testimony equaled that of two; hence, it follows that the Qur'an could also be established through a single narration. Is it possible for a Muslim to abide that? It is enigmatic how one can accept as sound the traditions which indicate that the Qur'an was established through testimonies, and, simultaneously, can hold the view that the Qur'an cannot be established except through uninterrupted transmission from the Prophet. Is not the absolute necessity that the Qur'an be uninterruptedly transmitted reason enough to regard all these traditions as absolutely false? It is strange that some scholars, like Ibn Hajar, have identified the two witnesses in the traditions as meaning the existence of a written text and an [oral tradition dating back to the Prophet].[19] One may conjecture that he was compelled to offer this explanation by the generally held condition about the necessity of uninterrupted transmission of the Qur'an. However, this explanation is obviously distorted on the following grounds.

First, it contradicts the explicit statement of all traditions, cited above, that indicate that the Qur'an was collected.

Second, according to this explanation, it becomes necessary to maintain that those who collected the Qur'an did not write that which was proven to be part of the Qur'an through successive transmission; in other words, they dropped from the Qur'an that which was already proven through uninterrupted transmission.

Third, there was no need to write down and memorize a verse which was already established through uninterrupted transmission. At the same time, writing and memorizing could not establish any verse as being part of the Qur'an if its transmission was not uninterrupted. At any rate, there is no point in making them a precondition in the collection of the Qur'an.

To summarize, these traditions must be discarded because they make the point that the Qur'an can be established without its having been uninterruptedly transmitted. This view has been discredited through the consensus of all Muslims.

Collection Traditions and the Alteration (Tahrif) of the Qur'an through Addition

If these traditions were authentic, and if it were possible to use them as evidence that alteration through omission (naqs) occurred in the Qur'an, it would follow that whoever made this deduction would take them as evidence of alteration through addition (ziyada). The reason is that the method presumably employed in collecting the Qur'an entails this corollary. It is not possible for anyone to deny this on the grounds that the extent of inimitability of Qur'anic eloquence precludes the possibility of adding to its text, and for that reason no analogy can be drawn between alteration through addition and alteration through omission. The reason that such an argument cannot be made is the fact that while the Qur'an's inimitability can preclude the possibility of matching a whole sura, it cannot prevent the addition to its text of a word or two or even a full verse, especially if it were a short one. Had such a possibility not existed, there would have been no need for the testimony of two witnesses, as related in the collection traditions, for a verse brought by a single person could have proved itself, by its eloquence, to be part of the Qur'an. Therefore, whoever maintains that tahrif occurred cannot avoid the corollary that additions have occurred as well, and this is absolutely against the consensus of the Muslims.

To conclude, the attribution of the collection of the Qur'an to the caliphs is an imagined view, contrary to the Book of God, the Sunna of the Prophet, and reason. It is not possible, for those who believe that tahrif occurred, to use this belief in their arguments and assertions. Even if we were to admit that Abu Bakr was the one who collected the Qur'an during his caliphate, then we should have no doubt that the method of collection described in these traditions is fallacious, and that the collection of the Qur'an was based on its uninterrupted transmission among Muslims. All that happened, in other words, is that the collector recorded in a codex what was preserved in the memories by means of successive transmission from the Prophet. There is, however, no doubt that 'Othman collected the Qur'an during his time, not in the sense that he collected the verses and the suras in one volume, but in the sense that he united the Muslims on the reading of one authoritative

recension, destroyed all the other texts that disagreed with it, wrote to the other regions of the empire to [have them] destroy all the copies in their possession, and forbade people to dispute the manner of reading the Qur'an. These facts have been accepted explicitly by a large number of Sunni scholars.

Al-Harith al-Muhasibi writes:

The prevalent view among people is that the one who collected the Qur'an was 'Othman, but they are wrong. 'Uthman compelled people to read [the Qur'an] in a uniform way on the basis of a selection which he agreed upon with the Muhajirun (Emigrants) and Ansar (Helpers) who were present at the time. He did this because he feared the outbreak of sedition as a result of the dispute between the people of Iraq and Syria regarding the "styles" (harfs) of the readings. Before this, several versions of the text existed, based on the seven harfs in which the Qur'an was revealed . . . ."[20]

As for the one reading on which 'Othman united the Muslims this reading was the one in circulation among Muslims, and which reached them through uninterrupted transmission from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny). Moreover, he banned the other readings, which were founded on the traditions that spoke about the revelation of the Qur'an in seven hiatf s. We demonstrated the falsity of these traditions earlier in this study. This action by 'Uthman was not criticized by anyone among the Muslims because the dispute over the readings was causing a conflict, sedition, and loss of unity among Muslims, to the extent that they were accusing each other of disbelief. As noted in some of the traditions, the Prophet had prohibited disputes in the matter of the Qur'an. The thing which 'Uthman was criticized for was his destruction of the rest of the codices and his ordering other regions of the empire to do the same with those texts that were in their keeping. Indeed, a group of Muslims protested against 'Uthman for doing that and called him "the destroyer of the [Qur'anic] texts."

Summary

It has been adequately demonstrated that the tradition about tahrif (corruption of the text in any form) is nothing more than a delusion and an imagination, maintained by those with weak reasoning, or those who fail to take into consideration all the pertinent details needed to derive a sound opinion, or those who are compelled to hold such an opinion. Any rational person can detect the weakness of the argument of those upholding such a distorted view of the state of affairs in the early history of Islam.

Notes

1. Bukhari, Sahih, vol. 6, pp. 477-78

2. Ibid., pp. 478-80. These two traditions, and the nineteen that follow, are quoted in lbn 'Abd al-Muttaqi, Muntakhab Kanz al- 'Ummal in the margin of Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, pp. 43-52.

3. Suyuti, al-Itqan, sec. 18, vol. I , pp. 167-68

4. Qurtubi, Tafsir, vol. I, p. 56

5. The mathani suras (as the term occurs here) are those consisting of less than a hundred verses, but more verses than those in the short suras in the last portion of the Qur'

an, known as al-mufassal. (Opinions diverge widely as to where this portion of the Qur'an starts, some putting it as early as sura 50.)-Trans.

6. The mi'in suras are those with more than a hundred verses.-Trans

7. Ibn 'Abd al-Muttaqi, Muntakhab Kanz al- 'Ummal, vol. 2, p. 48

8. Ibid, p. 52.

9. Bukhari, Sahih, vol. 6, p. 487

10. Ibid

11. Suyuti, al-Itqan, sec. 20, vol. I , p. 202

12. Ibid., 20, pp. 203--4

13. Ibid., p. 200. Al-Qurtubi, in Tafsir, vol. I , p. 50, says: "And among them [the reciters], on that day [yawm (a battle of) al-Yamama] seven hundred were killed, as reported."

14. Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah al-Hakim al-Nisaburi, Al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn fi al-Hadith wa fi Dhaylihi Talkhis al-Mustadrak , 4 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat wa Marba'at al-Nasr al-Hadithah, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 611

15. Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 5, p. 324

16. Ibn 'Abd al-Muttaqi, Kanz al- 'Ummal, vol. 2, p. 185

17. Zurqani, Manahil al- 'Irfan, p. 324

18. This tradition has been related by al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidhi, and al-Nasa'i. See Mansur 'Ali Naif, Kitab al-Taj al-Jami li-al-Usul fi Ahadith al-Rasul (Cairo: Matba'at 'Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, n.d.) vol. 2, p. 332

19. Suyuti, al-Itqan, sec. 18, vol. 1, p. 167

20. Ibid., p. 171

9. Evidence Based on the Literal Sense of the Qur'an

Synopsis: Demonstration of the evidential nature of the literal meanings of the Qur'an; the arguments of those who deny it, and their falsification; understanding the Qur'an is limited to those whom it addresses; the inference of the literal meaning by means of an exegesis based on personal judgment (ray); ambiguities in the import of the Qur'an are obstacles to comprehending it; recourse to meanings that contradict the literal meanings of the Qur'an invalidates the evidential character of those meanings; the prohibition to follow the ambiguous verses invalidates the evidential nature of the literal meanings of the Qur'an.

Undoubtedly, the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) did not invent for himself a special way to explain his intentions. He communicated with his people through the ways of explaining and speaking to which they were accustomed. He brought the Qur'an in order that they would understand its meanings and reflect on its verses, so they could carry out its injunctions and be restrained by its threats. This purpose of the Qur'an is stated repeatedly in the Qur'an itself. Thus, God, the Exalted, says:

Will they then not meditate on the Qur'an, or are there locks on their hearts? (Qur’an 47:24). And verily we have coined for mankind in this Qur'an all kinds of similitudes, that, haply, they may reflect (Qur’an 39:27). And lo! it is a revelation of the Lord of the Worlds. Which the True Spirit has brought down, upon your heart, that you may be [one] of the warners, in plain Arabic speech (Qur’an 26: 192-195). This is a declaration for humankind, a guidance and an admonition to those who ward off [evil] (Qur’an 3: 138). And We have made [this Scripture] easy in your language only that they may heed (Qur’an 44:58). And in truth We have made the Qur'an easy to remember; but is there anyone that remembers? (Qur’an 54: 17). Will they not then ponder on the Qur'an? If it had been from other than God, they would have found therein much incongruity (Qur’an 4:82).

These are only some examples of Qur'anic verses that point to the obligation of acting upon the injunctions in the Qur'an, and to the necessity to adhere to what is understood from its apparent meanings.

Among the factors that support the evidential nature of the apparent meanings of the Qur'an, and the ability of the Arabs to understand their intention, are the following:

1. The Qur'an was revealed as proof of the messengership of the Prophet, and the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) challenged all humankind to produce the like of at least one sura of it. This corroborates the fact that the Arabs understood the objectives of the Qur'an from its apparent meanings. Had the Qur'an been a riddle, it would have been inappropriate to call upon them to counter it, nor would its inimitability have been established for them, because they would not have been able to understand it. This is certainly contrary to the purpose of revealing the Qur'an and calling the people to believe in it.

2. The well-known traditions commanding people to adhere to "the two things of high estimation" (thaqalayn), which the Prophet left among the Muslims, clearly demonstrate that the meaning of "adherence" to the Book

is to follow it and to act upon its contents. It could not have had any other meaning.

3. There are numerous sound traditions that demand that traditions should be com- pared to the Qur'an, and that any that disagree with it should be discarded and regarded as invalid or vain; or the people should be forbidden to accept them; or the leading compilers [of the traditions] did not transmit them. These traditions explicitly establish the evidential nature of the apparent meanings of the Qur'an, and that its apparent sense is comprehensible to all linguists who are competent in Arabic. Among these traditions are those which demand that the very prerequisites for a sound tradition should be examined in the light of the Book of God, and those of them that do not comply with it should be rejected.

4. Inferences from Qur'anic verses were used by the Imams (peace be upon them) in their legal and other rulings. Among these are [the following]:

a. The opinion of the Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) when Zurara asked him how he knew that wiping [mash, in the ablution] was to be performed only on part of the head: The Imam replied, "[Because of the] position of [the preposition] bi."[1]

b. His opinion [expressed when] admonishing the Abbasid Caliph al-Manur against accepting the information given by a slanderer: "Such a man is an evil liver, and God, the Exalted, said: 'If an evil liver brings you tidings, verify it lest you smite some folk in ignorance'" (Qur'an 49:6).

c. His opinion regarding a person who prolongs sitting in the lavatory to listen to the musical performance [in the neighborhood], with the excuse that he had not come to it for that purpose. He [al-Sadiq] reminded him: "Have you not heard what God, the Exalted, said: 'Lo! the hearing and the sight and the heart--of each of these will be asked'" (Qur'an 17:36).

d. His opinion [expressed to] his son Isma'il: "When the believers testify to you, then believe them, in accordance with what God, the Exalted, has said, '. . . who believes in God, and is true to the believers . . .'" (Qur'an 9:61).

e. His opinion regarding the lawfulness of a slave marrying a thrice-divorced woman: "He is a husband, and God, the Exalted, has said, 'Until she has wedded another husband'" (Qur'an 2:230).[2]

f. His opinion regarding the view that a woman who has been divorced three times does not become lawful [to her first husband] through a temporary marriage ('aqd munqati'): "God, the Exalted, says, 'Then if he [the other husband] divorces her, it is no sin for both of them that they come together again' (Qur'an 2:230); and in a temporary (mut'a) marriage, there is no divorce."[3]

g. His opinion regarding the person whose nail was caused to fall and who had covered his toe with a tourniquet (mirara), [thus impeding the wiping required in ablution]: "[The solution to] this [condition] and its like is known from the Book of God, which states: 'He has not laid upon you in religion any hardship'" (Qur'an 22:78).

h. His opinion that it is lawful to marry some of the women, in which he cited the following verse of the Qur'an: "Lawful to you are all beyond those mentioned" (Qur’an 4:24).

i. His opinion that it is not permissible for a slave to marry [without the permission of his master], [an opinion] which he based on what God said: "A [mere] chattel slave has control of nothing" (Qur’an 16:75).

j. His opinion that it is lawful to eat certain animals, which he based on what God said: "Say, I find not in that which is revealed to me anything prohibited to an eater that he eat thereof, [except if it be carrion, or blood poured forth, or swine flesh]" (Qur’an 6:146).

These are some of the examples of the inferences the Imams made from the verses of the Qur'an. They are quoted in the appropriate chapters of the books on jurisprudence and in other types of works as well.

Arguments against the Evidential Nature of the Apparent Meanings of the Qur'an

A group of traditionists (mubaddithun) has taken a different view of this matter, has denied the evidential nature of the apparent meanings of the Qur'an, and has forbidden acting upon it. The group has based its argument on the following points:

1. The principle of election for the understanding of the Qur'an. According to this argument, the understanding of the Qur'an is limited to those to whom it was addressed. The [traditionists] supported this claim with a number of traditions on this subject. Among these is the mursal tradition,[4] related by Shu'ayb b. Anas, about the Imam al- Sadiq (peace be upon him), who is reported to have asked Abu hlanifa:

"Are you the jurist of the people oflraq?" He said, "Yes." The Imam asked, "On what do you base your legal opinions to them?" He replied, "On the Book of God and the practice (sunna) of His Prophet." The Imam asked, "O Abu Hanifa! Do you know the Book of God as it should be known? And do you recognize the abrogating verses from the abrogated verses?" He said, "Yes." The Imam said: "Woe unto you, O Abu Hanifa! You have claimed a knowledge which God has placed in none other than those upon whom He revealed the Book. Woe unto you, He did not place such knowledge except with the selected ones among the progeny of our Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny). Moreover, God, the Exalted, has not bequeathed on you even a word."

In another tradition, Zayd b. al-Shahham reports:

Qatada came to see Abu Ja'far [al-Baqir] (peace be upon him). The Imam asked him, "Are you the jurist of the people of Basra?" He replied, "So they claim." The Imam said, "It has reached me that you interpret (tufassir) the Qur'an." He said, "Yes." [The conversation went on] until the Imam said: "O Qatada, if you explain the Qur'an on the basis of your own opinion, then, indeed, you are doomed and have caused others to be doomed. And if you explain it on the basis of the opinions of the transmitters of tradition (al-rijal), then, too, you are doomed and have caused others to be doomed. O Qatada, woe unto you! The Qur'an is known to those to whom it has been addressed."

The response [to this is as follows]. Surely, the purport of these and other such traditions is to convey the fact that the understanding of the Qur'an as it should be understood, and the knowledge of its apparent and hidden meanings, and of its abrogating and abrogated verses, are limited to those to whom it was addressed. The first tradition is explicit in conveying this purport, for the Imam's question deals with the precise knowledge about the Book of God, about the distinction between the abrogating and the abrogated verses. Accordingly, the Imam's rebuke to Abu Hanifa was for claiming this kind of precise knowledge. As for the second tradition, it includes the term tafsir (to interpret, make an exegesis), which means "uncovering the veil," and as such, does not refer to the literal sense of the text because that is not something hidden and that needs to be unveiled. This interpretation of the tradition is construed from other explicit traditions that speak about the comprehension of the Book not being limited only to the Infallible Imams (peace be upon them). In addition, the statement of the Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him), in which he says, "God has not bequeathed on you even a word," conveys this sense, because it means that God has favored the legatees of His Prophet with the bequest of the Book. Significantly, this is the meaning of God's saying that "then We gave the Book as inheritance to those whom We elected our bondmen" (Qur’an 35:32). Those are the ones divinely chosen to understand the Qur'an as it really is, and others besides them have no share in it. This is indeed the meaning of [what the Imam said] in the first of the two traditions. Otherwise, is it reasonable to maintain that Abu Hanifa did not know anything about the Book of God, even God's saying that "say, He is God, the One" (Qur’an 111:1), and about other verses like this, which are clear in their meaning? The traditions that indicate the abovementioned [principle of] election are numerous, and some of them have already been cited.

2. The prohibition to interpret the Qur'an according to one's personal judgment (ra'y). According to this argument, abiding by the apparent meaning of the text is a form of interpreting (tafsir) the Qur'an on the basis of one's personal opinion. This has been forbidden, as is attested by the uninterruptedly transmitted traditions by the Sunnis and Shi’ites.

The response [to this is as follows]. The term tafsir, as mentioned earlier, means "uncovering the veil." As such, tafsir does not connote an explanation of the literal meaning of the text, for, being unconcealed, the literal meaning is not in need of being uncovered. And, even if we concede that explaining the literal meaning involves tafsir, it is certainly not tafsir on the basis of one's personal opinion; hence, it is not the type of tafslr prohibited by the uninterruptedly transmitted traditions. Rather, it is tafsir in the sense in which the term is ordinarily understood. Thus, for instance, if someone were to expound on one of the orations of Nahj al-Balagha [The Peak of Eloquence] in terms of how the words are commonly understood, as well as in accordance with both the connected and separate contexts, then such an endeavor would not be regarded as an interpretation through one's personal opinion (tafsir bil-ra’y). The Imam al-Sadiq alluded to this when he said: 'The [interpretations of the] ambiguous verses have led some people to their doom because they did not understand their meanings, nor did they

know the truth about them. Thus, they invented interpretations for them that were based on their personal opinions, and regarded themselves as not in need of inquiring about them from the legatees [of the Prophet] who would have apprised them." It is possible that tafsir bil-ra’y means formulating independent legal opinions without referring to the Imams (peace be upon them), in spite of their being affiliated with the Book of God in the obligation concerning the adherence [to the two things of high estimation (al-thaqalayn)] and the necessity of ultimately referring the text to them [for an exclusive verdict]. If a person acts upon the general or the absolute injunctions of the Qur'an, and does not accept the particularizations or restrictions reported on the authority of the Imams, then this is regarded as an interpretation on the basis of one's own personal judgment (tafsir bil-ra'y). In short, explaining a text according to its literal sense, after careful evaluation of the connected and separate contexts in the Book and the Sunna (prophetic tradition), or on the basis of a rational argument, is not considered interpretation on the basis of one's personal opinion, nor even plain interpretation as explained earlier. However, the abovementioned traditions indicate the need to turn to the Book and to act upon its directives. It is evident that the intention in referring people to the Qur'an is that they should submit to its literal meanings. As such, interpretation on the basis of one's own personal judgment must mean something other than acting in accordance with the literal meanings of the various textual and contextual evidence provided by the Qur'an, the Sunna, and reasoning.

3. The obscurities in the meanings of the Qur'an. In the Qur'an there are lofty meanings and obscure objectives. As such, these are obstacles to the understanding of its meanings, and to the comprehension of what it intends to convey. We find that the works of some early Muslim scholars are not understood except by well-informed scholars. How, then, can one understand the meanings of the Qur'an, which comprises the entire knowledge about the matters pertaining to the beginning and the end of the World?

The response [to this is as follows]. Although the Qur'an includes all the knowledge about the beginning and the end of existence, and although the knowledge about this aspect of the Qur'an is undoubtedly restricted to the ahl al-bayt of the Prophet, this does not nullify the fact that the Qur'an has an apparent sense that can be understood by anyone who is well versed in the Arabic language and its style of expression, and who could thus perform his devotions in accordance with the apparent meanings of the Qur'an, after scrutinizing the context.

4. The knowledge that the intention is different from the apparent meanings. We know, in general, that the general injunctions of the Qur'an have been particularized, and that the absolute ones have been restricted. We also know that some of the meanings of the Qur'an are definitely not intended in their apparent sense. However, it is not known which of the general injunctions are particularized in their application, and which of the absolute ones are restricted, and which of the apparent meanings are not necessarily intended as they appear; hence, it is not possible to be bound by their applicability and meaning. Consequently, the apparent meanings of the

Qur'an, and its general and absolute injunctions, are all part of the exposition, though they are not all part of the fundamental tenets. Hence, it is not proper to act upon them, lest one might inadvertently act against their reality.

The response [to this is as follows]. This summary knowledge can hinder a person from adhering to the literal meanings of the Qur'an only if a person intends to act upon them without first examining the sense they convey. However, after seeking and obtaining the level of knowledge whose existence among the apparent meanings is already ascertained by the believer, the problem of summary knowledge is resolved. Consequently, it can by no means be regarded as summary knowledge, leaving the believer without any restriction of acting upon the apparent meanings of the Qur'an. The same applies to the sunna of the Prophet. There, we determine the qualifications imposed on the general ordinances, and the restrictions on the absolute ones. Thus, if the summary knowledge hinders a person from adhering to the literal sense of the Qur'an even when this problem of summary knowledge has been resolved, it would have to be a hindrance in acting upon the apparent meanings of the sunna. Indeed, it would hinder the implementation of the principle of exemption in the performance of ambiguous injunctions, whether they set down obligatory or forbidden acts. This is because all the believers know about the existence of obligations in the sacred law. The corollary of this summary knowledge is the obligation of being cautious in implementing all the obscure injunctions, whether they pertain to prohibitions or obligations, though there may be no certainty that this caution is necessary. It is true that a number of traditionists have ruled that it is incumbent to act with caution in regard to obscure injunctions pertaining to prohibitions. This, however, is because they imagined that those traditions that order the believers to suspend judgment or to apply caution indicate that it is incumbent to be cautious or to withhold an opinion in regard to these ambiguous injunctions. Certainly, this opinion of theirs does not stem from their summary knowledge of the existence of required obligations in the Shari'a; otherwise, it would have been necessary for them to maintain that it was obligatory to apply precautionary measures even to ambiguous injunctions that pertain to obligations. However, we know of no one among them who has ruled thus. The reason that it is not necessary to exercise caution in this or other similar instances is that the problem of summary knowledge had been resolved with the acquisition of the possible level of information, and once it is resolved, it ceases to be effective. For further information on this subject, the reader is referred to our book on the principles of jurisprudence, entitled Ajwad al-Taqrirat.

5. Prohibition to follow the ambiguous verses. The verses of the Qur'an forbid the believers to act upon the ambiguous ordinances, in accordance with what God, the Exalted, says: "Itis He who sent down upon thee the Book wherein are clear (muhkamat) revelations-they are the substance of the Book-and others [which are] ambiguous (mutashabihat). But those in whose hearts is doubt pursue, forsooth, that which is ambiguous, seeking [to cause] dissension by seeking to explain it . . ." (Qur’an 3:7). The ambiguous verses, they maintain, include the apparent meaning; indeed, the least that

can be said about them is that they include the literal meanings of the Qur'an. Thus, the evidential nature of the apparent dimension of the Qur'an cannot be maintained.

The response [to this is as follows]. The word mutashabih (ambiguous, multivalent) is clear in meaning, and there is no [characteristic of] summation or ambiguity about it. The word means that a word or an expression bears two or more meanings and that all these meanings are equally applicable to it. Thus, if the word is used, it would be possible that any of these meanings is intended. One should therefore suspend judgment until an indication points to the correct meaning. Accordingly, an expression that carries a literal sense cannot be regarded as mutashabih, that is, allegorical or ambiguous.

If we concede that the word mutashabih is itself ambiguous, and may have a literal meaning, this would not be a cause for preventing a person from acting upon its apparent sense, especially when the established custom among the wise persons is to follow the apparent meanings of the words. For the possibility of its being nothing more than that is not an impediment for acting upon it on the basis of the established custom. To forbid that, it is necessary to establish absolute evidence to the contrary; otherwise, it must, without doubt, be followed. It is for this reason that the Master (God) can remonstrate with His servant if the latter disobeys the ostensible sense of His words, and it is appropriate for Him to punish His servant for his disobedience. In the same vein, the servant himself can protest against his Master if he heeds the literal sense of his Master's words, when this literal sense happens to be contrary to His purpose. In short, this established custom is to be followed in adhering to the literal meanings until absolute proof is established to prevent it.

6. Occurrence of Tahrif (alteration) in the Qur'an. The occurrence of alteration (corruption of the text) in the Qur'an is an impediment to act upon its apparent sense, because of the possibility of these literal meanings being connected to a context that would have conveyed its actual intention, but which has been deleted because of the alteration.

The response [to this is as follows]. The occurrence of tahrif in the Qur'an has been disproved, as demonstrated by our discussion earlier in this book. There, we mentioned that the traditions that order the believers to refer to the Qur'an are, in themselves, the proof regarding the absence of tahrif. If we were to relinquish this view, the corollary would be that the traditions impose the obligation to act in accordance with the Qur'an even with the likelihood of alterations having occurred. The conclusion of what has been said so far is that it is necessary to act upon the ostensible meanings of the Qur'an, and it is the foundation of the Shari'a, and one cannot act in accordance with the narrated traditions if they contradict the Qur'an.

Notes

1. The reference here is to the phrase "and rub your faces," which occurs in the verses that regulate the ablution for the prayer (verses 4:43 and 5:6). Trans.

2. This view is with regard to a man who divorces his wife three times. (This could be done through the expedience of pronouncing the divorce phrase three times.) He may not marry her again except if she had, in the meantime, married and divorced another man. Hence the practice of arranging for the woman to marry a slave, who would later be made to divorce her. The full Qur'anic injunction is as follows: "And if he has divorced her [the third time], then she is not lawful to him thereafter until she has wedded another husband [besides her first husband]."- Trans

3. The meaning of this verse-as well as the legal point that the Imam makes-is that this has to be a permanent marriage that can be terminated only with a divorce, not a temporary marriage that ends at the agreed time.-Trans

4. A mursal tradition is one that has a continuous chain of transmitters, but lacks the original narrator.- Trans.

10. Abrogation in the Qur'an

Synopsis: The lexical and technical meaning of al-naskh (abrogation); the possibility of abrogation; its occurrence in the Torah; its occurrence in the Islamic Shari'a; the three kinds of abrogation; the verses that are said to be abrogated, and the proof that they belong to the clear (muhkama) type of verses; the verse about temporary marriage (mut'a) and its proof, demonstrating the lawfulness of the mut'a type of marriage; stoning because of mut 'a marriage; the legal opinion of Abu Hanifa regarding the inapplicability of the punishment for adultery on mut'a marriage; his ruling regarding the inapplicability of the punishment for adultery if a man hires a woman and commits adultery with her; the attribution of this ruling to 'Umar; allegations regarding the mut'a; the open prejudice involved in the Companions' refraining to act upon the al-najwa verse; al-Razi's opinion and its rebuttal.

In the works of Qur'anic exegesis and in other related literature, many verses are said to have been abrogated. In fact, Abo Bakr al-Nahhas has compiled these verses in his book al-Nasikh wa al-Mansukh, and they amount to 137 verses.

We have undertaken this discussion to examine these verses that are claimed to have been abrogated, and to demonstrate that, in reality, not even one of them has been abrogated, let alone all of them.

We have limited ourselves to thirty-six of these verses, and these are the ones that call for discussion and explanation to clarify the truth concerning them. As for the rest of the verses, the status regarding them is sufficiently clear as to not require further elucidation to determine that they are not abrogated.

Al-Naskh (Abrogation) in the Lexicons

In its lexical meaning, the word al-naskh signifies "to have a copy made" (istiktab), in the sense of transcribing (istinsakh) or copying (intisakh). It also signifies "transfer" (naql), and "transformation" (tahwil). Moreover, it is used in conveying "succession" and "substitution" (tanasukh) of the inheritances and the epochs. In addition, it signifies "elimination" and "removal" (izala), and it conveys the sense of "cancellation" and "repeal" as its usage in the sentence "The sun canceled the shadow" indicates. This latter sense of the term was much in vogue in the language of the early Companions and their successors. Hence, they used to apply the term al-nasikh (the abrogator) to all the general injunctions on which a particularization or restriction was imposed, because the particularization and the restriction caused the earlier general application to be "repealed."[1]

Al-Naskh in Its Technical Usage

Technically, the term naskh signifies the abolition of an ordained matter in the Shari'a because of the passage of its period [of applicability], regardless of whether this abolished matter is related to the divinely ordained injunctions or to noncanonical laws; or whether it is related to the divinely ordained positions or other matters that revert to God, because of His being the Lawgiver. The latter signification of the term is the way it is seen in the case of an abrogation of only the recitation of a verse.

Nevertheless, we have restricted the abolition to matters ordained in the Shari'a so as to exclude situations in which the injunctions are terminated because their external conditions have ended. Thus, for instance, the obligation to fast ends with the end of the month of Ramadan; the obligation of performing the daily worship elapses with the passing of the appointed time of that worship; ownership of one's goods ends with one's death. This type of termination of an ordinance may not be called naskh because only the condition of an injunction has elapsed, and not the injunction itself. Moreover, according to Muslim scholars, there is no objection to its possibility or to its actual occurrence.

For further clarification of this issue, it is important to state that in the divine Shari'a the law is applicable in two different ways.

First, the law is applicable in the realm of legislation and promulgation. The law at this stage is created in the form of a positive legal case. In its applicability, there is no difference whether the subject matter exists externally or whether it does not exist. The basis of the legal decision is the hypothetical existence of the subject. Hence, when the Lawgiver says, "Partaking of wine is forbidden," for instance, it does not mean that the wine exists externally and that such a wine is ruled as forbidden. Rather, the meaning is that when the existence of wine is hypothetically conceived in the external sense, then it is ruled as forbidden in the Shari'a regardless of whether the wine actually exists in the external sense or not. Accordingly, the annulment of the ruling at this stage cannot take place except through abrogation (naskh) of the ruling.

Second, the law is applicable externally, in the sense that the law becomes effective because of the actual externality of the subject matter. For example, if wine actually exists externally, the unlawfulness of wine in the Shari'a becomes applicable to this wine in actuality. This applicability continues as long as its subject continues to exist. However, if the wine changes to vinegar, the prohibition that applied effectively to the wine would now cease to apply to the vinegar. But the termination of this ruling is not abrogation at all, nor has anyone raised a question as to whether it is or is not. The question arises only in the first stage, that is, in the realm of legislation and promulgation.

Possibility of Abrogation

The prevailing position among rational Muslims and others is the permissibility of abrogation in the sense that is open to dispute, namely, abolition of the legal ruling regarding its subject matter in the realm of legislation and promulgation. The Jews and Christians disagreed with this and claimed that abrogation is impossible, supporting their argument on [the basis of] an error which is weaker than a spider's web.

The summary of [the statement of] this error is as follows:

Abrogation supposes the lack of wisdom on the part of the abrogator, or his ignorance of some aspects of wisdom. Both suppositions are impossible [in the light] of God, the Exalted. This is so because the legislation of a ruling by the Wise and Absolute God is necessarily in accordance with the exigency that requires it. Moreover, an unplanned ruling is contrary to the wisdom that enacted it. Hence, rescinding a law which had been instituted

for [the importance of] its subject matter can mean one of two things: either that the exigency of the law remains with the knowledge of the abrogator (and this would contradict the wisdom of the legislator, despite the fact that He is the Absolute, Wise); or that this is because of the alteration of divine pre-ordination (bada'), and the discovery of the contrariety about that, as with man-made rulings and laws (and this necessitates ignorance on the part of God). Accordingly, the occurrence of abrogation in the Shari'a is impossible, because it presupposes that which is impossible.

The response [to this is as follows]. An established ruling by the Wise One may be intended as an instigation or a prohibition in the real sense. A case in point would be the commands which are intended as a test. It is possible to establish these kinds of ordinances and then abolish them, and there is no objection to that, because both the establishment and the abolition arose from the exigency and wisdom of the moment. This kind of abrogation does not postulate a lack of wisdom in the Lawgiver's judgment. Moreover, from the occurrence of alteration does not spring that which is impossible in the case of God's actions. On the other hand, the instituted ordinance may be a real one; nevertheless, it gets abrogated after a while. This does not mean that the ruling, after being instituted, is rescinded with regard to the same conditions and the same matter (which is what would make it impossible of the All-Wise, who knows what comes to pass). Rather, it means that the instituted ordinance is limited to a specific time known to God but unknown to people, and that its termination is after the end of that time, because the term to which it is limited is over, and the end to which it is linked has been reached.

[Clearly], abrogation in this sense is definitely possible. That a time specification is one of the things on which laws are conditioned is something no rational person can doubt. Thus, Saturday in the Mosaic law, for example, has a special significance that makes it necessary to consecrate it, of all other days, a day of rest for those who follow that law. Such is the case with Friday in Islam, as well as with the times for the prayers, the fast, and the annual pilgrimage, al-hajj. If it is conceivable that such a thing could occur in the sacred laws, then it is conceivable that time has a special significance that determines whether a ruling is to continue or not, for certain actions may be of benefit during a specific period of time but cease to be so after the period has lapsed, and vice versa.

In short, if it is possible for a specific hour, day, week, or month to have an effect on whether an act is beneficial or harmful, then the same could be true of a year. Hence, the act could be good during a certain number of years but not good after those years had ended. In addition, just as rulings that are restricted by some factor other than time may be so qualified by means of a separate indication, so is it possible to place a time restriction on a general ruling by means of a separate indicator. The reason is that exigencies may require that a ruling be set forth in general or absolute terms, although the actual intent is specific or restricted. The specificity or restriction would be explained in a separate indicator. Abrogation is in fact a time restriction on the absolute ruling, and this does not make it incompatible with wisdom, nor with alteration (bada'), in a way that is inadmissible of God, the Exalted. All

this is based on the understanding that enactment of a law and its legislation are caused by the benefits or harm of the act itself. As for those who maintain that rulings are determined by benefits that are inherent in them, the matter is even more clear, because an actual ruling, according to this opinion, is of the same nature as the rulings that are sent to test us.

Abrogation in the Torah

The discussion above nullifies the view of Jews and Christians regarding the impossibility of abrogation in the sacred law. It is a view they persist in holding in order to prove the continuity of the ordinances that were instituted by the Mosaic law. What is truly strange is that they insist on the impossibility of abrogation in the divinely ordained law in spite of the fact that abrogation did occur in many instances in the two Testaments.

1. It is related, [for example], in chapter 4 of the Book of Numbers (verses 2 and 3): "Take a census of the sons of Kohath, from among the sons of Levi, by . . . their fathers' houses, [and find those who are] from thirty years old up to fifty years old, all who can enter service, to do the work in the tent of meeting."

This decree was abrogated and the beginning age for the service was [changed to] twenty-five years, as related in chapter 8 of the Book [of Numbers] (verses 23 and 24): "And the Lord said to Moses, 'This is what pertains to the Levites: from twenty- five years old and upward they shall go in to perform the work in the service of the tent of meeting.'"

The decree was later abrogated a second time. The beginning age for service was [changed to] twenty years, as reported in chapter 23 of 1 Chronicles (verses 24, 32): "These were the sons of Levi by their fathers' houses, by the heads of [their] fathers' houses, as they were registered according to the number of the names of the individuals from twenty years old and upward, who were to do the work for the service of the house of the Lord. . . . Thus, they shall keep charge of the tent of meeting and the sanctuary."

2. It is related in chapter 28 in the Book of Numbers (verses 3-7): "The Lord said to Moses, ' . . . and you shall say to them, This is the offering, by fire, which you shall offer to the Lord: two male lambs a year old, without blemish, day by day, as a continual offering. The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer in the evening; also a tenth of an ephah of fine flour [as] a cereal offering, mixed with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil. . . . Its drink offering shall be a fourth of a hin for each lamb.'"

This decree was abrogated in chapter 46 of Ezekiel (verses 13-15): "He shall provide a lamb without blemish for a burned offering to the Lord daily; morning by morning he shall provide it. And he shall provide a cereal offering with it morning by morning, one-sixth of an ephah, and one-third of a hin of oil to moisten the flour, as a cereal offering to the Lord; this is the ordinance for the continual burnt offering."

3. It is also related in chapter 28 of the Book of Numbers (verses 9-10): "On the Sabbath day, two male lambs a year old, without blemish, and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour [as] a cereal offering, mixed with oil, and its drink offering: this is the burned offering of every Sabbath, besides the continual burned offering and its drink offering." This decree, too, was

abrogated in chapter 46 of Ezekiel (verses 4-5): "The burned offering that the prince offers to the Lord on the sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish and a ram without blemish; and the cereal offering with the ram shall be an ephah, and the cereal offering with the lambs shall be as much as he is able [to offer], together with a hin of oil for each ephah."

4. It is related in chapter 30 in the Book of Numbers (verse 2): "When a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth."

The permission to swear a firm oath in accordance with the ruling of the Torah was abrogated by what has been related in chapter 5 of Matthew's Gospel (verses 33-34): "Again you have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, 'Do not swear at all."'

5. It is related in chapter 21 of the Book of Exodus (verses 23-25): "If any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for bum, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."

This decree was abrogated with the prohibition from seeking retribution in the law of Jesus, as related in chapter 5 of Matthew's Gospel (verse 38): "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for tooth.' But I say to you, 'Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, tum to him the other also."'

6. It has been related in chapter 17 of the Book of Genesis (verse 10), in what God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations."

This has been endorsed by the law of Moses. Hence, in chapter 12 of the Book of Exodus (verses 48--49), it is related thus: ". . . And when a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised; then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you."

In chapter 12 of Leviticus (verses 2-3), it is related that God commanded Moses: "Say to the people of Israel, If a woman conceives, and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."

This ordinance was abrogated, and the burden of the circumcision was removed from the community by chapter 15 of the Acts of the Apostles (verses 24-30), and by a number of St. Paul's epistles.

7. It is related in chapter 24 of Deuteronomy (verses 1-3): "When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and if she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter husband dislikes her and writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies, who took her to

be his wife, then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled."

This was abrogated by the Gospel and divorce was declared prohibited, as reported in chapter 5 of Matthew (31-32): "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery." A similar decree is reported in chapter 10 of Mark (verses 11-12) and in chapter 16 of Luke (verse 18).

What has been mentioned [here] suffices to demonstrate that abrogation was present in the two Testaments.[2]

Abrogation in the Islamic Shari'a

There is no difference of opinion among Muslim scholars regarding the occurrence of abrogation. Evidently, numerous injunctions of the earlier laws were abrogated by the Islamic Shari'a. In addition, a number of injunctions of the Islamic Shari'a were abrogated by other ordinances in this legal system itself. The Qur'an has explicitly abrogated the original direction of prayer [Jerusalem]. Regarding this abrogation, there is no doubt whatsoever.

However, there is a controversy on the issue of whether any Qur'anic ordinances were abrogated by other Qur'anic verses, or by an authentic sunna (prophetic tradition), or by the consensus [of Muslim scholars], or by reasoning. Before discussing this matter, it is appropriate for us to elaborate on the modes of abrogation in the Qur'an. These are three in number.

Abrogation of the Recitation (tilawa) without the Ruling (hukm)

[First], the verse about stoning is cited as an example of this mode of abrogation. Those who maintain this say that this verse was a pait of the Qur'an whose recitation was subsequently abrogated, whereas the ruling remained effective. We mentioned earlier that maintaining that a recitation is abrogated is actually the same as maintaining the opinion about alteration. In addition, we explained that the documentation for this part has been derived from traditions with single narrations and, as such, cannot be admitted in obtaining an authoritative ruling.

Muslim scholars are in agreement that abrogation cannot be established through the documentation provided by a single narration, just as a Qur'anic text cannot be proven on that basis. The reason for this, besides the consensus of Muslim scholars, is that important matters that customarily become well known among people, and the spread of information about them (assuming they actually occurred), cannot be proven through a single narration. Indeed, its being reported by exclusively the one source, and not the others, is in itself the proof of falsehood or error on the part of the narrator. Accordingly, how can it be proven, on the basis of a single narration, that the stoning verse was part of the Qur'an and that its recitation was abrogated while its ruling remained effective? It was mentioned previously that 'Umar brought forth the verse and claimed that it was part of the Qur'an. But the Muslims did not accept his word because he was the only one to transmit this verse. Therefore, they did not include it in the

codices. Thus, subsequent scholars were compelled to accept the idea that the recitation of this verse was abrogated while the ruling remained in force.

Abrogation of Both the Recitation and the Ruling

[Second], those who maintain the view that there are verses whose recitation and ruling were abrogated cite the tradition narrated on the authority of 'A'isha (tradition 10), as discussed in [chapter 7]. The same points raised in that discussion apply here.

Abrogation of the Ruling without the Recitation

This [third] mode of abrogation is the one generally accepted by jurists and exegetes. Some scholars have written monographs on this topic, and have mentioned in them the abrogating verses and the abrogated ones. Among them are the famous scholar Abo Ja'far al-Nahhas and the traditionist al-Muzaffar al-Farisi. Some other scholars have opposed their views, and have rejected the existence of abrogated verses in the Qur'an. However, all are in agreement that abrogation is possible, and that there are verses in the Qur'an that abrogate the rulings that were well established in the previous sacred laws, and the ordinances that were introduced in the early days of Islam.

To clarify what is authentic in this category of abrogation, we must point out that the abrogation of a fixed ruling in the Qur'an could be of three kinds:

1. A ruling established by the Qur'an may be abrogated by a successively and uninter- ruptedly transmitted tradition, or by a definitive consensus that demonstrates that the abrogation was based on the opinion that came from the infallible Prophet or the Imam. Rationally and textually, there is no problem with this kind of abrogation, and, if it is proven for a given situation, then it should be followed; otherwise, one is not bound by the abrogation. Unquestionably, it is well established that the abrogation cannot be proven by means of a single narration.

2. A ruling established by the Qur'an may be abrogated by another verse that deals with the abrogated ruling and provides the basis for its termination. This type of abrogation is also without any problem. Scholars have cited the "secret conversa- tion" verse as an example of this type of abrogation. We shall discuss it in detail [later in this chapter].

3. A ruling established by the Qur'an may be abrogated by another verse that neither deals with the previous ruling nor provides the basis for its termination. Abrogation is called for in this case simply because the two ordinances are contradictory. Hence, the later verse is regarded as the abrogator of the earlier one.

It is a fact that this type of abrogation has not occurred in the Qur'an. How could that be when God says, "Will they not then ponder on the Qur'an? If it had been from other than God, they would have found therein much incongruity" (Qur’an 4:82).

However, many commentators and other scholars have not paid the necessary attention to the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an. As a result, they have assumed that a number of verses are inconsistent with each other, and have, as a result, maintained that the later verse abrogates the ruling of

the earlier one. Some of them have gone as far as to maintain that an inconsistency exists in cases where one of the two verses is actually a customary context for the explanation of the purport of the other verse (such as the particularization in relation to the general ruling and the restriction in relation to the absolute ruling), and have consequently abided by abrogation in these and similar cases. This attitude is rooted either in poor judgment or in a loose application of the word naskh in accordance with its lexical sense. Although naskh in this sense used to be widely accepted before its technical meaning came into usage, one would still be taking excessive liberty if one were to apply it in its generic sense after the technical sense had become established.

Discussion of the Verses that Are Claimed to Have Been Abrogated

At any rate, it is still necessary to examine the verses that are said to have been abrogated. We shall treat those cases of them where there is some ambiguity over whether they are abrogated or not. As for those instances in which the absence of abrogation is evident in accordance with what has been said so far, we shall not treat them here, but shall deal with them when we comment on the verses later in this book.

We shall treat the verses [said to have been abrogated] in accordance with their order in the Qur'an.

(1) Many of the people of the Book long to make you disbelievers after your belief, through envy on their own account, after the truth has become manifest to them. Forgive and be indulgent [toward them] until God give[s] His command. Lo, God is able to do all things. (Qur’an 2:109)

According to Ibn 'Abbas, Qatada, and al-Suddi, this verse was abrogated by the sword verse. This opinion has been adopted by Ja'far al-Nahhas.[3] The sword verse is the one in which God, the Exalted, says, "Fight those who believe not in God and the Last Day [of Judgment], and do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden-such men as practice not the religion of truth, being of those who have been given the Book-until they pay the tribute (jizya) out of hand and have been humbled" (Qur’an 9:29).

Abrogation is maintained here because of two erroneous principles.

[The first] one is that the elimination of a temporary injunction, when its time is up, amounts to abrogation. This is an obvious error, for abrogation supervenes only in cases where the injunction is not explicitly stated as temporary or as everlasting. This is because when the injunction is temporary, even if its time limit is mentioned in general terms, the evidence which clarifies its term and indicates its termination would customarily be one of the indicators that clarify the aim of the injunction. Accordingly, this [termination] does not constitute an abrogation in any sense. This is because abrogation is the elimination of a ruling that is established and explicitly [stated] as absolutely continuous and unrelated to a particular time. Fakhr al-Din al- Razi believes that abrogation is, at times, indicated when the time span of a temporary ruling is intimated by a separate clue. However, such an opinion is evidently incorrect. As for the injunction which includes an

explicit statement of permanence, then the absence of abrogation regarding it is self-evident.

The second [one is] that the people of the Book are those whom the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) was commanded to fight. This is groundless, because the Qur'anic verses that command warfare apply to jihad against the disbelievers (mushrikun) and invite them to believe in God, the Exalted, and the Hereafter. As for the People of the Book, it is not permissible for Muslims to fight them except when there are other reasons for that. In this connection, God, the Exalted, says: "Fight in the way of God against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo, God loves not aggressors" (Qur'an 2: 190); or if they cause sedition among the Muslims, as God says, "And slay them wherever you come upon them, and expel them from where they expelled you; for persecution (fitna) is worse than slaughter" (Qur'an 2: 191); or if they refuse to pay the tribute (jizya), as stated in the previously cited verse (Qur'an 9:29). Hence, in the absence of any other reason, it is not permissible to fight them merely because of their disbelief (kufr), as the verse explicitly states.

To summarize, the command in the verse is to pardon and forgive the People of the Book, for their desire to tum the Muslims back to disbelief is only the natural outcome of their own disbelief and does not contradict the command to fight them when there are other reasons requiring that. But those who suspect abrogation in regard to this verse have taken the word "command," in God's saying, "Until God shall give His command" (Qur'an 2: 109), in its imperative sense.[4] This caused them to imagine that God had commanded forgiveness of the disbelievers (kufr), until such time when He shall command the Muslims to fight them. Accordingly, they took this to imply abrogation.

It is important to point out that even if this explanation is hypothetically true, it still does not necessitate abrogation. However, such a presumption is incorrect. The reason is that the word "command" here refers to a primordial command and God's preordained decree concerning His creation. This meaning is supported by the fact that the command is predicated on God's causing it to pass, as well as on what God says after that, "Lo! God is able to do all things" (Qur'an 2:109).

The meaning of the verse involves the command to pardon and to forgive the People of the Book for their wish to "make the Muslims disbelievers," until God does what He desires regarding bolstering and strengthening Islam among His creatures. Furthermore, He would cause many among the disbelievers to convert to Islam, destroying others besides them, and punishing them in the Hereafter, and executing what He has preordained.

(2) Unto God belong the East and the West, and whithersoever you turn, there is God's countenance. Lo! God is All-Embracing, All-Knowing. (Qur'an 2:115)

The opinion that this verse has been abrogated has been attributed to a group that includes lbn 'Abbas, Abu al-'Aliya, al-Hasan, 'Ata', 'Ikrima, Qatada, al-Suddi, and Zayd b. Aslam.[5] However, they differed about the abrogating verse. lbn 'Abbas mentioned that the abrogating verse was "And wheresoever you may be [O Muslims, when you pray,] tum your faces

toward it [the Inviolable Place of Worship]" (Qur'an 2: 150), while Qatada maintains that it was "Turn your face toward the Inviolable Place of Worship" (Qur'an 2: 150), and so does al-Qurtubi.[6] The reason for the abrogation, according to these scholars, is that the Prophet and all the Muslims were free to pray in any direction they wished, although the Prophet used to prefer the direction of Jerusalem. Hence, this was abrogated with the order to tum specifically toward the sacred mosque of Mekka.

Nevertheless, the weakness and the error of their view are obvious in the light of God's saying, "And We appointed the direction (the qibla) which you formerly observed, only that We might know him who follows the Messenger, from him who turns on his heels" (Qur'an 2: 143). This latter verse clearly states that turning toward Jerusalem was [determined] on the basis of God's command for some good that necessitated it, and the Prophet's choice had no role in it at all.

It is more appropriate to maintain that the verse in question establishes the absence of any specific direction toward God because He cannot be contained in any place. Accordingly, in whatsoever direction man turns in his worship, his supplication, and all his services, he is turning toward God, the Exalted. It was on this ground that the ahl al-bayt (the Imams) justified permission for the traveler to face any direction in the performance of the recommended prayers, as well as justifying the validity of the obligatory prayers performed mistakenly between East and West, and the validity of the prayer in which the worshiper is confused and does not know the direction of the qibla. They have also regarded the prostration performed in a direction other than the qibla during the recitation of the Qur'an as valid. Sa'id b. Jubayr (God's mercy be on him) followed this practice when al-Hajjaj ordered his slaughter on the ground.[7] Thus, this verse is general, and it was particularized in the obligatory prayer by making it obligatory, at one time, to tum toward Jerusalem and, subsequently, toward the Ka'ba in Mekka. Moreover, according to an opinion, this is also the case with the prayers recommended when one is not in the state of moving. As for those reports in which it is related that the general verse was revealed only for the performance of the recommended prayers, there is no ground to believe in such specification. As previously pointed out, the verses are not limited to the circumstances of their revelation.

To recapitulate, the claim that this verse has been abrogated can be valid if two points are true.

First, that it was revealed specifically in relation to the obligatory form of worship. The invalidity of such a thing is well known. It has been reported, in some of the traditions narrated by the Sunnis, that this verse was revealed concerning supplication, the recommended forms of worship for a traveler, the prayer of a confused person, and the prayer toward a direction other than the qibla by mistake. [8] Moreover, we have already noted that the Imams cited this verse in more than one context. Second, [for the claim to be valid], the revelation of the verse should have oc- curred prior to the verse that commanded the turning toward the Ka'ba. This also is unsubstantiated. It is for this reason that the claim to its abrogation is definitely unfounded. In some of the narrations related on the authority of ahl al-bayt, it is clearly

stated that the verse has not been abrogated. However, it may be true that abrogation here is intended in the very general sense that includes the fact that the verse in question is qualified by subsequent verses. If this is what is intended here, then there is no objection to it, and it is not improbable that perhaps this was the intention of Ibn 'Abbas when he spoke about the abrogation in this connection, and we alluded to this signification of the word naskh earlier.

(3) O you who believe! Retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the murdered; the freeman for the freeman, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. (Qur'an 2:178)

It has been claimed that this verse was abrogated by God's saying, "And We prescribed for them therein: the life for the life, and the eye for the eye, and the nose for the nose, and the ear for the ear, and the tooth for the tooth" (Qur'an 5:45).

For this reason, the majority of Sunni scholars maintain that if a man is killed in retaliation for the killing of a woman, nothing reverts to his heirs in the form of compensation.[9] However, al-Hasan and 'Ata' have opposed this opinion and have maintained that a man may not be killed for killing a woman. According to al-Layth, if a man kills his wife, he may not be killed only for killing her.[10] The Imami Shi'ites have maintained that the avenger of a woman's blood has an option between asking for blood money or punishment of the killer, provided that [if he chooses the latter], he would pay [the killer's heirs] a man's indemnity. The widespread opinion among Sunni scholars is that a freeman cannot be killed for killing a slave, and the Imami scholars have reported a consensus on this issue. However, Abu Hanifa, al-Thawri, Ibn Abi Ya'la, and Dawud [al-Zahiri] have expressed their opposition to them in this matter and have maintained that a freeman can be killed for killing a slave who does not belong to him. [11] A group of isolated scholars among them have upheld the view that a freeman can be killed by a slave, even if he happens to be his own.[12]

In actuality, the first verse is precise and, as such, an abrogating verse cannot repeal it. There is a guiding principle in it: The second verse is unqualified regarding a slave and a freeman, and a male and female. Accordingly, it does not have a clear ruling concerning slaves and women. Above all, the verse does not aim at clarifying the characteristics of the killer and the killed; rather, it aims at clarifying that the retaliation should be equal to the offense, as is implied in what God, the Exalted, says, "And one who attacks you, attack him in like manner as he attacked you" (Qur'an 2:194).

The [second] verse is devoid of any point and in general has no clear meaning; hence, it cannot serve as an abrogating verse for the first verse. If, however, its intent were to establish a point in this regard; and if it were clearly general in application; and if, further, it clearly establisheed a ruling for the Muslim community and did not merely state that such a ruling existed in the Torah-in such a case the first verse would qualify [the second verse's] generality, and serve as a clue to its purport. The general injunction does not qualify as an abrogator of a restricted injunction, even if it happens to be chronologically subsequent to it. On the contrary, restricted

injunctions are clues for regulating the apparent meanings of the general injunctions, as is the case with restricted injunctions of a later period. It is for this reason that there is no ground to maintain that it is permissible to kill a freeman for killing a slave.

As for the tradition related on the authority of the Imam 'Ali, from the Prophet, in which he said, "The blood of each Muslim is on a par [with that of other Muslims]," this tradition, assuming that it is sound, is qualified by the verse. This is because the intent of the report is the permission for a freeman to be killed for killing a slave, and hence it is general in application.

It is indisputable that the evidentiary worth of a general ruling is dependent upon the absence of any restriction being applied to it, whether preceding it or subsequent to it. However, as for the report narrated on the authority of the Prophet, through al-Hasan, who had received it from Samra, its chain of transmission is weak and, hence, cannot be regarded as trustworthy. According to Abu Bakr b. al-'Arabi, "Undoubtedly, ignorance has affected those who say that a freeman can be killed for killing his own slave, and who support their opinion by citing a tradition on the authority of al-Hasan, who related it on the authority of Samra. He said that the Prophet said: 'He who kills his slave, we shall kill him.' This report is weak." [13]

In addition to that, this tradition contradicts another tradition, related by 'Amr b. Shu'ayb on the authority of his father and his grandfather, regarding a man who intentionally killed his slave: The Prophet ordered him whipped and banished him for a year and struck out his share from the Muslim booty of war, but did not slay him in retaliation. [14] It [the report transmitted from Samra] is also contradicted by what has been reported by Ibn 'Abbas on the authority of the Prophet, and by Jabir from 'Amir, who reported on the authority of 'Ali, "A freeman cannot be killed for killing a slave";[15] and by what 'Amr b. Shu'ayb related from his father on the authority of his grandfather: that Abu Bakr and 'Umar did not kill a freeman for having killed a slave.[16] It has already been stated above that the traditions related on the authority of ahl al-bayt are in agreement that a freeman can be killed for killing a slave. Indisputably, the ahl al-bayt are the authorities in matters of religion after their great forebear, the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family). Considering their view on the matter of killing, there remains no room for claiming the abrogation of the verse regarding the killing of a freeman for killing a slave.

Furthermore, in relation to the killing of a man for killing a woman, the verse, according to the doctrine of the Imami Shi'ites, as well as of al-Hasan and 'Ata', has not been abrogated, either. But according to the opinion of Sunni scholars, it is.

The explanation of the Imams' view is that the literal sense of God's saying that "retaliation is prescribed for you" (Qur'an 2: 178) is that retaliation is an obligation and a duty. It is, moreover, evident that it becomes an obligation when retaliation is sought by the avenger of the blood. This matter is known apart from the verse and is proven by what God, the Exalted, says, "And, for him who is forgiven somewhat by his [injured] brother, let the prosecution be fair and let the payment be with kindness" (Qur'an 2: 178).

Accordingly, the purport of the verse is that it is incumbent upon the killer to submit to the ruling of retaliation if the avenger of blood seeks that from him. Moreover, it is evident that this ruling applies when a man kills another man, or when a woman kills a man or a woman. But if a man kills a woman, it is not incumbent upon him to submit to punishment simply because retaliation is demanded. He has the right of refusal until he collects half the amount of compensation [for his own killing]. The legal authority has no right to apply retaliation to him before that.

In other words, the terms of the verse establish that the substitute for a woman is a woman and, hence, a man cannot substitute for her. Accordingly, there is nothing in the verse that could cause its abrogation. Yet it is true that outside evidence establishes that it is obligatory for a man who kills a woman to surrender for retaliation when the avenger of the blood of the woman has paid half of the compensation [due for killing a man as a substitute for a woman]. Thus the man [who killed the woman] would constitute the total [indemnity] of the [murdered] woman; [but because] he substituted for her [in retaliation], he [additionally] receives half [of his own indemnity]. This is a different case and does not affect the first ruling derived from the verse. Hence, there is nothing in this ruling to support its abrogation.

To conclude, the occurrence of abrogation in the [first] verse is dependent upon the establishment of the killer's obligation to surrender as soon as the avenger of the woman seeks retaliation, as maintained by Sunni scholars. But how are they to establish it? To do that, they have to adhere to the general sense provided by the second verse, as it is inferred from their statements, and to the prophetic tradition, which says, "The blood of each Muslim is on a par [with that of other Muslims]." We have already shown the weakness of the opinion based on this documentary evidence. Alternatively, they [Sunni scholars] will have to adhere to the report, narrated by Qatada on the authority of Sa'id b. al-Musayyib, in which it is related that 'Umar killed a person from among the people of Sana'a in retaliation for the killing of a woman and held them all responsible for her killing.

Al-Layth reports from al-Hakam, who reported on the authority of 'Ali and 'Abd Allah. They said, "If a man kills a woman intentionally, then he is liable to be slain in retaliation for killing her." Al-Zuhri reports from Abu Bakr b. 'Amr b. Hazm, who reported, from his father and his grandfather, that the Prophet said, "A man is to be killed in retaliation for killing a woman." [17]

This opinion is invalid for the following reasons:

1. These traditions, even if they are assumed to be authentic, are in contradiction of the Qur'an. Accordingly, they cannot be admitted as evidence. We already explained above that there is a consensus among Muslim scholars that abrogation cannot be established on the basis of a single tradition.

2. These traditions are contradictory to the ones reported on the authority of the Imams and to those reported by 'Ala', al-Sha'bi, and al-Hasan al-Basri on the authority of 'Ali (peace be upon him), who said, regarding a man who

kills a woman, "The relatives of the woman, if they wish, may kill the man [in retaliation, provided they] pay half the blood money [of the man]; and if they wish, they may take half the blood money of a man." [18]

3. The first tradition among these is based on a chain of transmission that does not go back to the source of the narrative (mursal). The fact is that Ibn al-Musayyib was born two years after the [end of the] caliphate of 'Umar; [19] hence, his report is too far removed from 'Umar to be acceptable without an intermediary. However, even if we were to concede its reliability, it still consists of a narrative about 'Umar's act, which, in itself has no evidentiary nature. As for the second report, it is weak, and with a chain of transmission that does not go back to the source of the narrative. The third tradition, assuming that it is reliable, is generally applicable, and capable of being restricted to the payment of half the amount of the blood money.

To conclude, the verse under consideration is not proved to have been abrogated by any means. The claim to its having been abrogated is based on the legal opinion of a group of jurists. How can it be possible to desist from what God says by taking into consideration what X or Z says about the matter? What is astonishing is that a group of jurists should issue its ruling against the Qur'an, in spite of its consensus that the Qur'an cannot be abrogated by a single tradition. Indeed, it has become clear from this discussion that God's saying that "who so is slain wrongfully, We have given power to his heir" (Qur'an 17:33), [and His saying that] "and there is life for you in retaliation, O men of understanding" (Qur'an 2: 179) do not qualify as abrogators of the verse under discussion, which differentiates between a man and a woman, and between a freeman and a slave. We will present a complete discussion on this matter when we offer our exegesis of the verse under consideration.

(4) It is prescribed for you, when one of you approaches death, if he leaves wealth, that he bequeath to parents and near relatives in kindness. [This is] a duty for all those who ward off [evil]. (Qur'an 2: 180)

A group has claimed that this verse has been abrogated by the inheritance (mawarith) verse. Others have claimed that it was abrogated by a tradition in which the Prophet says, "A bequest in favor of an heir at law is inadmissible."[20]

The fact is that the verse has not been abrogated. As for the opinion that it has been abrogated by the inheritance verse, this is refuted by the fact that the verses indicate that the inheritance is regulated [according to the inheritance verse] only when there are neither a last will and testament nor outstanding debts. Accordingly, how can one argue that it abrogates the injunction regarding the last will? In explaining the reason for its abrogation, it is maintained that in the early days of Islam, inheritance was not fixed the way it was done in the Islamic law later on. All of the estate used to pass on to the children of the deceased, and what was given to the parents was left through a will. Consequently, this verse was abrogated by the verse about inheritance.

This opinion is refuted by the following points:

1. It was not proved - although it was included in the compilation of al-Bukhari-- because it was established, through a consensus among Muslim scholars, that abrogation cannot be effected by a single narration.

2. This opinion can be sustained only if the inheritance verse was subsequent to the abrogated verse, and how can those who maintain this abrogation prove such a chro- nology? As for the claim that this chronology is a definite one, as maintained by some Hanafi scholars, it is upon them to prove it.

3. It is evident that this verse cannot be applied in the case of the relatives, because they do not inherit when there is a child. How can it, then, be reasonable that the inheritance verse abrogates the injunction about the last will in regard to the relatives? In any case, since the inheritance verse takes effect in the absence of the last will, it accentuates the ordinance regarding the last will and its effectiveness [in legislating for other heirs]. Consequently, there is no sense in its being the abrogator of the verse on the last will and testament.

As for the view that the verse was abrogated by the prophetic tradition quoted above, it, too, is invalid, because of the following reasons:

1. The authenticity of the tradition is not established, and even al-Bukhari and Muslim do not accept it. The author of the Qur'anic exegesis al-Manar has discussed the problem of the chain of transmission that these two scholars cite for it.[21]

2. This tradition is in contradiction to the elaborate traditions narrated on the authority of the ahl al-bayt, indicating that it is permissible to make a last will and testament in favor of an heir at law. In a sound tradition replied by Muhammad b. Muslim on the authority of the fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir (peace be upon him), he says:

I asked him regarding the last will for an heir at law. He said, "It is permissible." And then he proceeded to read the verse "If he leaves wealth, that he is to bequeath in favor of parents and near relatives in kindness" (Qur’an 2: 180).

This point is made by a number of other traditions of the Imams.[22]

3. The tradition under consideration, even if sound, and immune from any contrariety, cannot be admitted as evidence of the abrogation of the verse, because its terms are not incompatible with the substance of the verse. At the most, the terms are restrictive of the generality of the verse. Hence, it is specific about a last will in regard to the parents if they are prevented, for any reason, from inheriting. So, too, is the case with the relatives who cannot otherwise inherit. By contrast, if it is hypothe-sized that there exists incompatibility between the terms of the tradition and the verse, we have already mentioned that a single narration, according to the consensus of the scholars, cannot be admitted as the abrogator of the Qur'an. Therefore, the verse is precise and not abrogated.

In addition, it is important to explain the Qur'anic subtlety when it uses the word kitaba. This signifies a "requirement to carry out something." This is the purport of what God, the Exalted, says, "He has prescribed (kataba) for Himself mercy" (Qur’an 6: 12). Reason dictates the obligation of carrying out the judgment of the Master in all cases where there is no

explicit permission from Him to the contrary. In other words, a last will in favor of the parents and relatives is obligatory, as required by the verse. However, the established practice among the Muslims, the well-attested traditions from the Imams among the ahl al-bayt, and the consensus of the jurists of every generation have provided us with the required permission [regarding the last will]. Hence, what is established on the basis of the verse, in conjunction with this permission, is the recommendation regarding the last will and testament. It emphasizes its recommendation for all of humanity. The purport of the "prescription" in this context is that the decree is intended in the sense of legislation, and not in the sense of compulsion.

(5) O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may ward off [evil]. (Qur’an 2:183)

It is claimed that this passage was abrogated by what God, the Exalted, says, "It is made lawful for you to go unto your wives on the night of the fast" (Qur’an 2: 187).

In support of this abrogation, they mention the following reason: In the beginning the obligatory fast for the community was similar to the obligatory fast for the preceding community. One of its rulings was that if a person went to sleep before the evening meal in the month of Ramadan, it was not permissible for him to eat after waking up during that night. And if someone among them went to sleep in the late afternoon, food, drink, and women were forbidden to him. Thus, this was abrogated by God's saying, "And eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct to you" (Qur’an 2: 187), as well as by His saying, "It is made lawful for you to go unto your wives on the night of the fast" (Qur’an 2: 187).

At one point, Sunni scholars were in agreement that the verse making [sexual intercourse] lawful [during the nights of the month of Ramaqan] is an abrogating verse.[23] Later, however, they disagreed. Some maintained that it abrogated the preceding verse. They did this by inferring from the verse that the obligatory fasting mentioned in the Islamic Shari'a was similar to the obligatory fasting among the earlier communities. This opinion is held by Abu al-'Aliya and 'Ata', and it is attributed by al-Nahhas to al-Suddi also.[24] Others, however, say that the verse granting permission actually abrogated what they used to do [rather than permitting it].

Clearly, the first verse can be abrogated only if it is possible to establish that it was revealed before the second verse, and this is not possible for the one who maintains such an opinion to prove it. Moreover, the purport of the comparison in the verse between the fast of this community and the fast of earlier ones must be one of showing resemblance. This is contrary to how the verse has traditionally been understood; indeed, it is contrary to the stated sense of the verse. The intention of the verse is to compare the two fasts from the point of view that both were divinely prescribed. There is nothing in the verse to suggest that the two kinds of fasting are similar and therefore substantiate the claim of abrogation. If it were to be established that [the comparison of the two types of fasting] is dependent upon some external factors, then the abrogation would effect a ruling that is not in the Qur'an, in which case the mat- ter would be beyond the scope of this work.

(6) And for those who can afford it, there is a ransom (yutiqun): the feeding of a man in need. But whoso does good of his own accord, it is better for him. (Qur’an 2: 184)

It is asserted that this passage has been abrogated by the following verse, in which God, the Exalted, says, "And whoever of you is present, let him fast for the month" (Qur’an 2:185).

The claim about abrogation in this verse [is based on 'ransom' (tawq)] . Abrogation would have been self-evident if the meaning of tawq were "ease" and "ability." If such had been the case, the verse would mean that whoever can fast has the choice not to fast, and can give a ransom, in its place, such as feeding the poor. Consequently, the verse would certainly have been abrogated.

[The other key derivation of the term tawq is taqa.] It is clear that the meaning of taqa is "the capacity to deal with immense hardship." Accordingly, the import of the verse is that God, the Exalted, after making the fast individually incumbent on people in the preceding verse, and dropping the obligation for the sick and for travelers, and requiring them to make it up at another time, intended to clarify, for the rest of the people, that for those who find an immense hardship in fasting and need to put much effort into fulfilling the duty, they are relieved of performing the fast obligation and of making up for it at a subsequent date. The people thus exempted included distressed old men, persons suffering from 'utash,[25] and sick persons whose illness continues in the month of Ramadan of the following year. Instead, they would be required to pay the ransom [for the missed obligation]. Consequently, the verse, while conveying the individual obligation of fasting for the believers during the appointed days, and the necessity of making up the missed fast at some other time for those who are ill or are traveling, states explicitly that the obligatory ransom is indicated for a category of people other than these two categories for which the fasting is made incumbent. This being the case, how can one claim that the import of the verse lies in the optional choice, for the one who possesses the ability to fast, between two obligations-fasting or paying the ransom? The traditions narrated on the authority of the ahl al-bayt in this regard are exhaustive, and we mentioned them while commenting on the verse.[26]

Although the term taqa is used in the sense of ease and ability, its lexical meaning is "ability [in dealing] with immense hardship, and exerting the utmost effort." Thus, in Lisan al- 'Arab [of Ibn Manzur], one reads, "Al-tawq means ability, that is to say, the utmost that one can endure for the extent of what is possible to perform with hardship." It has been related that both Ibn al-Athir and al-Raghib have stated this as well. If we admit that the meaning of taqa is "ease," it follows that the word itaqa signifies "bearing something with ease." If a task is made easy by something in the doer, then it must itself be difficult and incapable of being accomplished without the utmost exertion. Rashid Rida, in his commentary al-Manar, cites his mentor, Muhammad 'Abduh, as saying, "The Arabs do not say, 'He is capable of doing something,' except when his ability to do it is extremely weak, in such a way as to incur immense hardship because of it."[27]

The verse under consideration is precise (muhkama) and therefore may not be abrogated. It conveys a ruling which is different from the ruling applicable to those for whom the fast is obligatory at its appropriate time or at some other time. All that we have discussed [here] is based on its well-established reading. As for the reading of Ibn 'Abbas, 'Aisha, 'Ikrima, and Ibn al-Musayyib, who read the verb (yutiqun) in its passive sense--"they are enabled"-rather than as "they are able" or "they can afford,"[28] their stance is clear. However, on the basis of what has been opined by Rabi'a and Malik, regarding the old and the disabled, for whom there is no penalty if they break their fast,[29] the verse is abrogated. However, there is a problem of reliability with this opinion. Moreover, the substance of the verse is the proof against those who maintain it.

(7) And fight not with them at the Sacred House of Worship until they first attack you there, but if they attack you [there], then slay them. Such is the reward of disbelievers. (Qur’an 2:191)

According to Abu Ja'far al-Nahhas, most of the scholars are of the opinion that this passage has been abrogated, and that the disbelievers attacked in the Sacred House and in other spots. He attributes the opinion about the abrogation to Qatada also.[30] The fact is that the verse is precise, and is therefore not abrogated. Thus, if it is maintained that the abrogator of the passage is what God, the Exalted, has said- "slay the idolaters wherever you find them" (Qur’an 9:5)-then such an opinion is obviously invalid. The reason is that the earlier passage is specific, and a specific passage is a clue for understanding the purport of a general ordinance, even if it were known to be an earlier revelation. Hence, this is even more true when the order of the revelations is unknown. Accordingly, fighting the disbelievers is restricted to places other than the Sacred House of Worship, except that if they were to start hostilities in it themselves, then it would be permissible to fight them there.

On the other hand, if those who maintain abrogation base their view on the tradition that says that the Prophet ordered the slaying of Ibn Khatal, even though the man had taken refuge in the Ka'ba, this, too is wrong-first, because it is a single narration, and therefore does not qualify as an abrogator; and second, because there is no evidence of abrogation. This is because Muslim and al-Bukhari, in their Sahihs, relate that the Prophet said, "It [this action] was never made lawful for anyone before. And it was made lawful for me only for that particular moment."[31] The explicit meaning of this tradition is that such an action is the exclusive privilege of the Prophet. Therefore, there is no justification for taking it as indication of abrogation, except as a concession to the legal opinion of some jurists, but this is an argument against them.

[Another verse connected with fighting is the following one.]

They question you [O Muhammad] with regard to warfare in the sacred months.[32] Say, "Warfare therein is a great [transgression]." (Qur’an 2:217)

According to Abu Ja'far al-Nahhas, the scholars are agreed that this verse is abrogated, and that fighting the disbelievers in the sacred month is permissible. Only 'Ata' differed, maintaining that the verse was decisive and that, as such, fighting was not permissible in the sacred months. [33]

However, there is complete agreement among the Imami Shi'ites, both in their writings and their legal decisions, that the prohibition remains in effect. This opinion is stated by al-Tusi in his al-Tibyan and by Muhammad Hasan al-Najafi in his Jawahir al-Kalam. This is a sound opinion, because if the verse that is cited as abrogating the ordinance about the [sacred months] is the one in which God says, "Slay the idolaters wherever you find them" (Qur'an 9:5), as mentioned by al-Nahhas, then it is indeed far-fetched. This is because the [latter] verse makes the injunction about killing the disbelievers conditional upon the passing of the sacred months. Indeed, God, the Exalted, says, "Then, when the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters wherever you find them" (Qur'an 9:5). Thus, how can the verse abrogate the injunction regarding the prohibition of fighting in the sacred months?

If, on the other hand, they base their argument on the unrestricted command in the sword verse-"And wage war on all the idolaters as they are waging war on all of you" (Qur'an 9:36)-then it is obvious that a general ordinance cannot serve as the abrogator of a specific one, even if the former happens to follow the latter chronologically.

Moreover, if they base their argument on what they related about the subject from Ibn 'Abbas and Qatada-namely, that the verse under consideration was abrogated by the sword verse-then the following must be said to them in refutation:

First, abrogation cannot be established by means of a single narration. Second, this report is not transmitted on the authority of the infallible Imams. In all likelihood, it is the personal opinion of Ibn 'Abbas and Qatada. Third, the report is contradicted by the one related by Ibrahim b. Sharik. He reported from Ahmad-that is, Ibn 'Abd Allah b. Yilnus-who reported from al-Layth b. Abi al-Azhar, on the authority of Jabir, who had heard the Prophet say, "Do not attack in the sacred month except when you are attacked or they fight. When this happens, be prepared until [one of the sacred months] has passed."[34] Also, this report is contradicted by what has been reported on the authority of the ahl al-bayt regarding the prohibition to wage war in the sacred months.

Moreover, if they hold to abrogation on the basis of what they narrate about the battle of the Prophet against the Hawazin at Hunayn, and against the Thaqif at al-Ta'if, in the months of Shawwal, Dhil al-Qa'da, and Dhil al-Hijja of the sacred months, then they are refuted by the following:

First, abrogation cannot be established through a single tradition. Second, the Prophet's action, if the narrative is sound, could have resulted from a number of factors. It could have happened because circumstances necessitated it. Hence, how could it serve as abrogator of the verse?

(9) Wed not idolatresses (mushrikat) till they believe. (Qur'an 2:221)

It is alleged that this verse was abrogated by God's saying, "And so are the virtuous women, of those who received the Book before you, [lawful for you] when you give them their marriage portions" (Qur'an 5:5).

Ibn 'Abbas, Malik b. Anas, Sufyan b. Sa'id, 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Umar, and al- Awza'i held this opinion, whereas 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar maintained

that the latter verse was abrogated by the former and that, hence, [a man] was prohibited from marrying a woman from the people of the Book. [35]

The fact is that nothing was abrogated in either verse. This is because if by "idolatresses," for whom marriage was prohibited by the first [verse], is meant the worshipers of idols and images, as the apparent sense of the verse suggests, then the prohibition to marry them does not contradict the permission to marry the women belonging to the people of the Book, who are referred to in the second verse. Consequently, neither verse abrogates the other. However, if the meaning of "idolatresses" is more general than the "women of the people of the Book," as those who believe in the abrogation assume, the second verse would restrict the first one; and the two verses, taken together, would mean that marrying a woman from the people of the Book is permitted, but marrying an idolatress is not. It is true that it is generally accepted that marriage to a woman from the people of the Book is not permissible except in the form of temporary marriage (mut 'a). This is eithcr because of the restriction applied to the verse about the general permission by the traditions purporting the prohibition of permanent marriage, or because of the view that the verse [regarding marriage to a scripture woman] indicates that a permanent marriage is unlawful. On the other hand, it has been reported from al-Husayn and the two Saduqs that a permanent marriage [to a scripture woman] is permitted. We shall treat the subject later in its appropriate place, God willing.

(10) There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error. (Qur'an 2:256)

A group of scholars maintains that the above passage has been abrogated by God's saying, "O Prophet! Strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites" (Qur'an 9:73).

Some of them maintain that the verse refers, in particular, to the People of the Book [Jews and Christians] since they could not be attacked because of their disbelief. This we noted earlier. The fact is that the verse is precise and has not been abrogated, nor is it restrictive. This is so because the word ikrah (compulsion), appears in the dictionary with two meanings: first, "that which stands exactly opposite to assent." This is the sense in which the following revelation from God uses the word: "But it may happen that you hate (tukrihu) a thing which is good for you" (Qur'an 2:216). Second, [it means] "that which stands exactly opposite to choice." This is the sense conveyed by God's saying, "His mother bears him with pain (kurhan), and brings him forth with pain" (Qur'an 46: 15). The reason is that bearing a child and giving birth to it are tasks done willingly, but, at the same time, are beyond our willpower. The opinion that the verse has been abrogated, or that it is restricted, is contingent on the word ikrah being used in the first sense. However, this opinion [that it is used in the first sense] is incorrect because of the following reasons.

First, there is no evidence to support such a meaning. A word that carries two meanings may not be interpreted in terms of one of them, rather than the other, without the proper contextual evidence.

Second, the word "religion" (din) is broader in meaning than the term "fundamental beliefs" (usul) and its derivatives (furu'). The mention of

"disbelief" and "belief " following [the word "religion"] does not restrict the word "religion" to the fundamentals only. Common usage points to the application of the major proposition to its minor one, in that understanding the fundamentals leads one to carry out the derivatives of religion. There is no doubt that justifiable ikrah (compulsion, coercion) was well established in the Shari'a from the very beginning in accordance with the practice of rational beings. Numerous examples of this kind of compulsion can be provided. It includes compelling a man in debt to honor his debts, compelling a wife to obey her husband, compelling a thief to give up theft, and so on. How can one say, then, that there was no compulsion in the Islamic Shari'a at any time?

Third, the second meaning of ikrah-namely, "that which stands exactly opposite to choice"-would not accord with God's saying that "the right direction is hence-forth distinct from error" (Qur'an 2:256), except if the purport were to convey the reason for the injunction, and the fact that compulsion is not practiced because it is unnecessary, considering the clarity of the right direction and its distinctness from error. If this is the purport of the verse, then it cannot have been abrogated, because the proof of Islam has been self-evident from the time it emerged. Its ascendancy, however, came about gradually. This means that compulsion was less likely to occur toward the end of the Prophet's mission because Islam at that point was even more manifest, and its proof more evident. Since this condition was common among the groups of the believers, it is impossible to restrict the injunction to some groups while excluding of others. The corollary of that would have been to prohibit warfare against all the disbelievers. Such a consequence is necessarily false.

The truth is that the purport of ikrah in the verse is the opposite to choice, and the sentence is a declarative sentence (khabariyya), and not a creative one (insha'iyya). The purpose of the verse is to explain what is repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'an- namely, that the divine Shari'a is not based on compulsion, neither in its fundamentals nor in its derivatives. Rather, there is a divine wisdom in sending the prophets, revealing the books, and clarifying the ordinances-which is that those who are to be doomed shall be doomed possessing knowledge, and those who are to live shall live possessing knowledge, "in order that mankind might have no argument against God" [Qur'an 4: 165]. This is as God, the Exalted, says, "Lo! We have shown him the way whether he be grateful or disbelieving" (Qur'an 76:3).

Briefly stated, then, the purport of the verse is that God, the Exalted, does not coerce anyone to have faith or be obedient. But He clarifies the truth, making it distinct from error, and He has indeed done that. Therefore, anyone who believes in the truth believes of his own free will, and anyone who follows an error does so of his own volition. God-sanctified be He, although able to guide all humankind if He so desires-- in His wisdom decided that they are not to be compelled in their actions after the truth has been made clear for them and has been made distinct from falsehood. Thus God, the Almighty, says:

Had God willed He could have made you one community. But . . . that He may try you by that which He has given you. So vie one with another in good works. To God you shall all return, and He shall then inform you of that wherein you differ (Qur’an 5:48). Say: For God is the final argument; had He willed He could indeed have guided all of you (Qur’an 6: 149). And the idolaters say: "Had God willed, we had not worshiped anything besides Him, we and our fathers, nor had we forbidden anything without [command from] Him. Even so did those before them. Are the messengers charged with nothing save plain conveyance [of the message]?" (Qur’an 16:35).

(11) As for those of your women who are guilty of lewdness, call to witness four of you against them. And if they testify [to the truth of the allegation], then confine them to the houses until death [shall] take them or [until] God [shall] appoint for them a way [through new legislation]. (Qur’an 4: 15)

And as for the two of you who are guilty thereof, punish them both. And if they repent and improve, then let them be. Lo! God is Relenting, Merciful. (Qur’an 4:16)

Some scholars, including 'Ikrima and 'Ubada b. al-Samit, maintain, as reported by al-Hasan on the authority of al-Raqashi, that the first of these verses was abrogated by the second; and the second one, by the ruling that if the person committing adultery were a virgin, he or she would be given a hundred lashes and banished for one year, and, if deflowered but unmarried (thayb),[36] a hundred lashes and stoning till death.[37] Some, like Qatada and Muhammad b. Jabir, have maintained that the first verse applies exclusively to the thayb, whereas the second applies to virgins; and that both have been abrogated by the flogging-and-stoning ruling. Others, like Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid, and those who follow them, like Abu Ja'far al-Nahhas, maintain that the first verse deals exclusively with adultery committed by women, whether thayb or virgins, whereas the second verse deals with adultery committed by men, both thayb and virgins; and that both of the verses have been abrogated by the flogging-and-stoning ruling.[38] Whatever the case, as mentioned by Abu Bakr al-Jasas, the community has not disagreed that both rulings about the male or female adul- terer have been abrogated. [39]

The truth is that neither of the two verses has been abrogated. The following is the explanation.

The word al-fahisha (lewdness) means an act that is excessively evil and abomi- nable. This applies to the act when it occurs between two women, which is tribady; and between two men, which is sodomy; and between a man and a woman, which is adultery. There is no specific meaning for al-fahisha, neither lexically nor idiomatically, to suggest it is synonymous with fornication. Moreover, holding that the first verse [Qur’an 4: 15] was abrogated is contingent on the following: first, that the "confining to the house" is the maximum punishment (hadd) for committing the act of lewdness, and, second, that "appointing the way" means that the stoning-and-flogging rule is applied to the woman.

Neither point can be proved. The apparent sense of the verse suggests that the confinement of the woman to the house is designed to make it impossible for her to commit the abominable act again, and that this is

therefore a way of forestalling an evil act. This kind of anticipatory action is established in all important matters, such as those pertaining to the protection of a person's honor, life, and crucial interests. In fact, some scholars are of the opinion that these preventive measures should be applied to all reprehensible acts. On the other hand, the apparent sense of appointing a way for the woman who has committed an abominable act is that it appoints for her a way by means of which she can relieve herself of the punishment [in the hereafter]. Accordingly, how can it be stoning and flogging? Would a sensible woman, confined to the house, living comfortably, be willing to be stoned or flogged? Moreover, how can flogging or stoning be a way for her? And if that is a way for her, then what would be the way against her? According to the preceding, it may be true that the word fahisha in the first verse refers, in particular, to tribady; and in the second (Qur'an 4:16), to sodomy. (We shall explain this later.) But it may also refer to something more general than tribady and adultery. On the basis of these two probable meanings, the ruling is the obligatory confinement to the house of the woman who has committed an abominable act, until God sets her free, whereupon she would be allowed to go out. This would be either because of her sincere repentance, which should safeguard her from committing the abominable act again; or because she is no longer capable of lewdness due to old age and the like; or because of her inclination to get married and be wedded to a man who would take care of her; or because of any such steps that would safeguard her from committing lewdness. This ruling remains in force. As for flogging or stoning, it is another ruling legislated in order to punish both men and women who have com- mitted an abominable act, and this latter ruling is alien to the first ruling. Therefore, there is no reason for it to be an abrogator of it.

In other words, the first injunction was legislated to prevent the recurrence of the abominable act; and the second injunction was legislated as a chastisement for the first crime and to prevent other women from committing a similar act. As such, there is no incompatibility between the two that would indicate that the first should be abrogated by the second. However, if a woman dies from flogging or stoning, the necessity of confining her to the house would of course be eliminated because the purpose [of such confinement] would have been obtained. Aside from that, the injunction [regarding confinement] remains in force for the women for whom God has not appointed a way.

In short, whoever reflects on the verse will find no reason to suspect abrogation regardless of whether it was revealed before or after the flogging verse [Qur'an 24:2]. As for the opinion regarding the abrogation of the second verse, that, too, is dependent on two points: first, that the pronoun in ya'tiyaniha (the two of you who are guilty thereof) refers to adultery; and, second, that the punishment (al-Idha', or "doing harm") means punishment through vilification, cursing, rebuke, and so on. Although there is no reason to support both these points, they are incompatible with the apparent sense of the verse, for the following reasons.

The dual form of the third person pronoun is used thrice in the second verse, and undoubtedly its purport the third time is the same as it is the first

two. It is evident that [all three times it] refers, in particular, to men. Consequently, the reference is to the coming together of two men, and not men and women in general. This is because the dual form of the pronoun would not be sound if it did not refer to two men. A better way would have been to use the plural form, as in the preceding verse. There is therefore a strong reason to maintain that the lewdness indicated in the second verse refers specifically to sodomy, and not to adultery or something more general than adultery and sodomy. If this is the case, then the subject of the verse is extraneous to the subject of the verse on flogging.

In contrast, even if we admit that the ruling in the verse includes the adulterer, there is still no reason to suggest that a specific punishment is required by the verse, except what has been reported from Ibn 'Abbas, namely, vilification and beating with shoes. However, this is not the proof that establishes abrogation. Thus, the obvious course is to take the verse in its literal sense and then qualify it by means of the flogging verse or the ruling about stoning, which is established through definitive practice.

In sum, there is no reason to maintain that either verse was abrogated except [if we] follow the opinion of others, or trust the single transmissions that have no theoretical or practical use.

(12) Lawful unto you are all beyond those mentioned, so that . . . (Qur'an 4:24)[40]

It is said that the above verse has been abrogated by the traditions that prohibit marriage for women other than those mentioned in the verses. The validity of this claim depends on the abrogator being a particular and subsequent verse abrogating, rather than qualifying, an earlier and a general verse.

The fact is that the particular verse functions as a restricter of the general, whether preceding it or succeeding it, and not as its abrogator. It is for this reason that a single tradition, which meets the condition for its admission as evidence, is sufficient to particularize a general ruling, as we shall discuss in our treatment of the permissibility of particularizing the Qur'anic injunction by means of a single tradition. But that would not be the case if the subsequent particularizer were an abrogator, for abrogation cannot be proven by means of a single tradition. Furthermore, the verse does not bear verbal generality. It is established by its general application and other contextual factors. Accordingly, if other evidence is produced that can support its particularization, then it would mean that the generality in the verse is not meant in reality.

And those [women] from whom you seek contentment, give them their portions as a duty. (Qur'an 4:24)

The general view among Sunni scholars is that the permission to contract al-mut'a (temporary marriage of pleasure) was abrogated, and that its prohibition is established until the day of Judgment. The Twelver Shi'ite scholars, however, are in agreement that the permission remains in effect and that the verse has not been abrogated. A group of the Companions of the Prophet and the second generation of the Companions agree with them in this matter. According to Ibn Hazm: "Ibn Mas'ud, Mu'awiya, Abu Sa'id, Ibn 'Abbas, Salma and Ma'bad, the sons of Umayya b. Khalaf, Jabir, and 'Amr

b. Hurayth continued, after the death of the Prophet, to consider it [mut'a] lawful. Moreover, Jabir reported, regarding all the Companions, that they continued to uphold its lawfulness during the time of the Prophet and of Abu Bakr and almost till the end of 'Omar's caliphate." Then he [Ibn Hazm] adds, "Among the Successors of the Companions, Tawus, Sa'id b. Jubayr, 'Ata', and the rest of the [Mekkan] jurists believed in its permissibility." [41]

Shaykh al-Islam al-Marghiyani has attributed the opinion regarding the permissibility of the mut'a to Malik, deducing it from his statement that "the reason is that the mut'a marriage was permissible; and it remains thus until its abrogator can be proven."[42]

Ibn Kathir attributes to Ahmad b. Hanbal the view that the mut'a is permissible when necessary, in accordance with a certain tradition.[43] Ibn Jurayh., a leading personality and jurist of Mekka in his time, contracted mut'a marriages with seventy women.[44] We will discuss this subject, God willing, when we come to this verse in our exegesis. However, here we shall present a brief discussion in order to prove that the substance of this verse was not abrogated.

To make this clear, the abrogation of the injunction in question depends on two things: first, that the purport of al-istimta' (enjoyment) in the verse is enjoyment of women by the mut'a type of marriage; and second, that the mut'a marriage was subsequently prohibited.

As for the first condition-namely, seeking the enjoyment of women by al-mut'a there is no doubt of its being established. The traditions reported both by the Sunnis and the Shi'ites regarding that are numerous. Al-Qurtubi says: 'The majority maintain that the meaning of mut'a marriage was [the one that was practiced] in the early days of Islam. Ibn 'Abbas, Ubayy, and Ibn Jubayr read the verse [as follows]: 'And those from whom you seek contentment for a specified time, give to them their portions.'[45] With this in mind, one should not take into account al-Hasan al-Basri's view that this verse refers to a permanent marriage, and that God in His Book did not make al-mut'a permissible. Al-Hasan goes on to attribute this opinion to Mujahid, and Ibn 'Abbas also, whereas the traditions related on their authority, stating that the verse was revealed concerning mut 'a marriage, gives the lie to such an attribution. At any rate, the abundance of traditions proving this kind of marriage and its legality relieves us from the obligation of proving it and unnecessarily prolonging this discussion.

As for the second condition-the proof that the mut 'a type of marriage was prohibited after it had been permitted- this is out of the question. This is because whatever may possibly be suggested as abrogator must be one of the following verses, none of which qualifies as abrogator.

[First, we have] the verse in which God, the Exalted, says, "O Prophet! When you [men] put away women, put them away for their [legal] period" (Qur'an 65: 1).[46] This opinion has been attributed to Ibn 'Abbas.[47] But the attribution is incorrect, because, as we shall mention, Ibn 'Abbas remained firm throughout his life in maintaining the lawfulness of mut'a.

The response [to the view that Qur'an 65:1 is the abrogator] is obvious. If abrogation is assumed because of the shorter legal period of waiting for the woman who has contracted a than for one who has contracted a [permanent]

marriage, then there is no evidence to this effect, either in this verse or in any other verse. Moreover, a waiting period of the same length is required of all women. On the other hand, if abrogation is assumed because there is no divorce in the mut'a contract, the verse in question here does not deal with the conditions and circumstances of divorce as to when it may, and when it may not, be given.

[Rashid Rida, in] al-Manar, relates, on the authority of some commentators, that the Shi'ites maintain that there is no waiting period after the mut'a marriage.[48] This is nothing but monstrous slander. There is not a single book of Shi'ite jurisprudence, from the earliest to the most recent, whose author can be charged with such a view even as a deviation, let alone there being a consensus about it. The Shi'ites shall certainly have a day with those who have falsely attributed opinions to them and have ascribed to them erroneous views-the day when adversaries shall be brought together and those who follow falsehood shall be lost.[49]

[Second, we have] the verse in which God, the Exalted, says, "And to you belongs half of that which your wives leave" (Qur'an 4: 12).[50] This verse abrogates the verse about the mut 'a because the woman who contracts this kind of marriage neither inherits nor is inherited. Hence, she is not a wife. This opinion has been attributed to Sa'id al-Musayyib, Salim b. 'Abd Allah, and al-Qasim b. Abu Bakr.[51]

Our response to this assertion is that the verses which prohibit mutual inheritance in the mut'a type of marriage are a particularization of the general verse that deals with inheritance. There is, moreover, no indication that marriage as such necessitates mutual inheritance. Indeed, it is well established that a nonbeliever cannot inherit a Muslim; and likewise, a murderer cannot inherit his victim. The most this verse demonstrates is that inheritance is limited to the permanent marriage. How can this be an abrogation of the mut'a verse?

[Third], The following traditions are regarded as abrogators of the verse:

a. It is related that 'Ali b. Abi Talib told Ibn 'Abbas, "You are certainly a person gone astray. Certainly, the Prophet has forbidden mut'a and the meat of domestic ass since [the battle of] Khaybar."

b. Al-Rabi' b. Sabra relates on the authority of his father, who said: "I saw the Prophet (peace be upon him) standing between the Rukn and the Bab [in the mosque of the Ka'ba], saying: 'O people! I had permitted you to seek contentment [through mut'a] from women. However, God has forbidden that until the Day of Resurrection. Hence, those among you who have any of them should let them go, and do not take back from them anything that you have given them."'

c. Salma relates on the authority of his father, who said, "The Prophet of God (peace be upon him and his progeny) permitted al-mut'a for three days in the year during which the battle of Awtas occurred, and then he prohibited it."

The response to this contention is [as follows].

First, abrogation cannot be established by means of a single narration, as we have mentioned above repeatedly. Second, these traditions are in contradiction to the ones reported by uninterrupted transmission on the

authority of the ahl al-bayt, which prove that the mut'a was permitted, and that the Prophet never forbade it. Third, the proof that the mut'a was prohibited at some time in the life of the Prophet is not sufficient reason to judge that the verse was abrogated, for it is possible that this period preceded the permission that was revealed in the Qur'an. Furthermore, there are numerous traditions, reported by Sunni chains of transmission, regarding the permission to contract mut'a during the last years of the Prophet's life until the caliphate of 'Umar. If there is any tradition that disputes this latter fact, then certainly it is a falsehood and there is no doubt that it should be rejected. In order to provide more information, we will mention some of these traditions.

1. A tradition is narrated by Abu al-Zubayr. He said:

I heard Jabir b. 'Abd Allah say, "We used to seek contentment [through mut'a] in exchange for a handful of dates or flour during the time of the Prophet and Abu Bakr, until 'Umar prohibited it-that is, the mut'a marriage-in the case of 'Amr b. Hurayth."[52]

2. A tradition is related by Abu Nadra. He said:

I was with Jabir b. 'Abd Allah when someone came to him and said, "Ibn 'Abbas and Ibn al-Zubayr differed on the two types of mut'a: the mut'a of the pilgrimage[53] and the mut'a of women." To this, Jabir, said: "We used to practice both of them with the Messenger of God, and then 'Umar prohibited us from practicing them. Thus we have not returned to them."[54]

3. Abu Nadra also related from Jabir b. 'Abd Allah:

He said, "Two types of mut'a were practiced during the time of the Prophet. However, 'Umar forbade us from practicing them, and, consequently, we denied them to ourselves."[55]

4. [In another variant tradition], Abu Nadra related from Jabir:

He said, "We used to practice two types of mut'a during the time of the Prophet, the pilgrimage and the women. Then 'Umar prohibited us from practicing them, and, consequently, we denied them to ourselves."[56]

5. Reporting also from Jabir, Abu Nadra said:

I said, "Ibn al-Zubayr forbids the mut'a, whereas lbn 'Abbas commands it." To this, Jabir said: "I was the one who reported the prophetic tradition: We used to seek contentment [through mut'a] during the Prophet's and Abu Bakr's time. However, when 'Umar assumed power, he delivered an oration to the people. He said: 'Surely, the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his progeny), this very Prophet, and the Qur'an, this very Qur'an, they both permitted two types of mut'a during the Prophet's time, and I prohibit both of them and I shall punish anyone practicing them. One of them is the mut'a of women. I shall not enable any person to marry a woman for a fixed period but that I shall cover him with stones.'[57]

6. A tradition is narrated by 'Ata'. He said:

Jabir b. 'Abd Allah returned from Mekka, having performed the lesser pilgrimage. We came to his house to see him and the people asked him about certain things. Then they mentioned al-mut 'a. He said, "Yes, we sought contentment during the time of the Prophet and Abu Bakr and 'Umar."[58]

This same tradition is reported by Ahimad b. Hanbal in his Musnad, and he added, ". . . until toward the end of the caliphate of 'Umar."[59]

7. A tradition is related by 'Imran b. Husayn. He said:

The verse regarding the mut'a was revealed in the Book of God, the Blessed, the Exalted. And we followed it with the Prophet, and no verse was revealed to abrogate it, nor did the Prophet prohibit it, until he died.[60]

This tradition has also been reported by al-Razi in his commentary on this verse in which he adds, "At that time, a man did what he desired [concerning this matter], in accordance with his personal opinion."[61]

8. A tradition was reported on the authority of 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud:

He said, "We were on an expedition with the Messenger of God, and there were no women with us. So we told the Prophet, 'Should we emasculate ourselves?' He forbade us that. Then he permitted us to marry a woman for a fixed period in exchange for a garment." Then 'Abd Allah recited, "O you who believe! Forbid not the good things which God has made lawful for you, and transgress not. Lo! God loves not transgressors" (Qur’an 5:87).[62]

It must be pointed out that the reciting of the verse by 'Abd Allah clearly establishes that the prohibition of mut'a was neither from God nor from the Prophet. It was, rather, something which occurred after the Prophet's time.

9. A tradition is reported by Shu'ba on the authority of al-Hakam b. 'Uyayna. He said:

I asked him [al-Hakam] about this verse, that is, the mut'a verse, whether it was abrogated. He said, "No." Al-Hakam said, 'All said that had it not been for 'Umar's prohibition of the mut'a, no one would have committed adultery except a scoundrel.'"[63]

Al-Ququbi reports the same tradition on the authority of 'Ata', who related it from Ibn 'Abbas.[64]

It is possible that the word al-shaqi (scoundrel) is used in this tradition to convey the sense in which it has been explained in the tradition related by Abu Hurayra. He said:

The Prophet said, "No one except a scoundrel will enter the Fire." He was asked, "What is a scoundrel?" He replied, "He is the one who does not act in accordance with what is required in obedience [to God], and does not abandon acts of disobedience to God."[65]

10. A tradition is reported by 'Ata'. He said:

I heard Ibn 'Abbas say, "May God have mercy on 'Umar. Al-mut'a was nothing but a mercy from God, the Exalted, with which He had shown compassion to the community of Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny). Had he not prohibited it, no one would have been in need of fornicating except a few."[66]

The traditions that have been used to support the view of those who maintain the abrogation of the verse on al-mut 'a are of various kinds. Some among them are traced back to al-Rabi' b. Sabra on the authority of his father-these are numerous. In some of them it is asserted explicitly that the Prophet stood between the Rukn and the Maqam, or the Bab of the Maqam [in the mosque of Ka'ba], and announced the prohibition of the mut'a until the Day of Resurrection. Others among them are traced back to the Imam

'Ali, and they relate that he reported from the Messenger of God that it was unlawful. Still others are transmitted from Salma b. al-Akwa'.

As for those which are traced back to Sabra, in spite of the fact that they are reported from many sources, they are all related on the authority of one person, namely, Sabra. Consequently, as established earlier in this work, a single narrative cannot be used as evidence of abrogation [of a Qur'anic injunction]. In addition, the substance of some of these traditions proves their falsity. How can it be rationally accepted that the Prophet stood, delivering a sermon, between the Rukn and the Maqam, or between the Bab and the Maqam, announcing the prohibition of a thing, until the Day of Resurrection, to the assembled crowd of Muslims, and yet no one except Sabra heard it? Or, that no one among the thousands assembled, except him, reported it? Where were those Emigrants (Muhajirun) and Helpers (Ansar) who used to gather everything that the Prophet said or did? Where were those narrators, who took great care to register every movement of the Prophet's hands and the glances of the Prophet's eyes, to participate along with Sabra in relating the prohibition of the mut 'a until the Day of Resurrection? More important, where was 'Umar himself, when this declaration was made, to spare himself from attributing the prohibition of the mut'a to himself? Additionally, Sabra's traditions are riddled with contradictions, and belie one another. In some of them the prohibition is placed in the year when Mekka was conquered;[67] in others it took place during the Farewell Pilgrimage [the Prophet's last pilgrimage].[68] In conclusion, Sabra's traditions regarding the prohibition are unreliable for more than one reason.

As for what has been related on the authority of 'Ali b. Abi Talib, regarding the prohibition of the mut'a marriage, it is undoubtedly fabricated. The reason is that there is a consensus among Muslims that the mut'a was still lawful in the year of the conquest of Mekka. How then can it be possible that 'Ali would use a report from Ibn 'Abbas to show that the mut'a was made unlawful during the Battle of Khaybar? It is for this reason that some have suggested the possibility that the phrase "from the time of Khaybar" is connected not with the mut'a, but with the preceding narrative, which deals with the prohibition of the meat of the domestic ass. This possibility has been related on the authority of Ibn 'Uyayna, as reported in al-Muntaqa and in Sunan al-Bayhaqi in the section on al-mut'a.

However, such a probability is unfounded [for several reasons].

First, it is contrary to the rules of the Arabic language. The negation in the report occurs [only] once, at the beginning of the sentence [the Prophet has forbidden . . .]

Consequently, it has to be related to its circumstance. The sentence "I was hospitable to Zayd and 'Amr on Friday" necessarily conveys that the person honored them both on Friday. However, if the intention is to convey that he specifically honored 'Amr on Friday, then it would be necessary for him to say, "I was hospitable to Zayd, and I was hospitable to 'Amr on Friday."

Second, this possibility contradicts the explicit statement in the traditions, related by al-Bukhari, Muslim, and Ahmad b. Hanbal, that

indicate that 'Ali b. Abi Talib said, "The Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) banned the mut'a of women on the day of the Battle of Khaybar, and the meat of the domestic ass."[69] Moreover, al-Bayhaqi narrates, in his section on the mut'a, a tradition on the authority of 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar, also in connection with the prohibition of the mut'a on the day of Khaybar. [70]

As for what has been related on the authority of Salma b. al-Akwa', from his father, who said, "The Prophet of God (peace be upon him and his progeny) permitted al-mut'a for three days in the year during which the Battle of Awtas occurred, and then he prohibited it," this tradition is a single narration that cannot be admitted as evidence of abrogation. Moreover, had this been a sound tradition, it could not have been unknown to Ibn 'Abbas, Ibn Mas'ud, Jabir, and 'Amr b. Hurayth, or to any other Companions and Successors. How could it have been known to them when Abu Bakr did not prohibit the mut'a during his caliphate, [and when] 'Umar did not forbid it during the major part of his caliphate, but only toward its end?

Third, we have cited Ibn Hazm's report that a number of Companions and Successors stood firm by the view that the mut'a should be permitted. Ibn Hazm's assertion that a number of Companions announced a legal decision permitting al-mut'a is substantiated by the following report narrated by Ibn Jabir in Tahdhib al-Athar on the authority of Sulayman b. Yasar, who received it from Umm 'Abd Allah, the daughter of Khuthayma:

A man from Syria who lodged in her house said, "Celibacy has indeed become unbearable for me. I seek contentment with a woman." So she directed him to a woman. They agreed on the conditions and had them witnessed by responsible persons ('udul). He stayed with her as long as God desired, then he left. 'Umar b. al-Khattab came to know about the matter. He sent for me and asked me about the truth of what had been reported to him. I told him it was true. He told me to notify him when [the Syrian] came. When he came, I informed him and he sent for him, and said, "What made you do what you did?" He replied: "I did what I had done when I was with the Prophet, and he did not forbid us from doing it until God took him. Then I [continued to do it] when Abu Bakr was [the caliph]. He too did not forbid it until God took him away. Then came your time. You did not report its prohibition to us." At that, 'Umar said, "I swear by the One in whose hand is my life, if I had already declared its prohibition, then I would have [certainly] stoned you." [Thus he ordered], "Make this [prohibition] known so that marriage (nikah) will be distinguished from fornication (sifah)."

Another tradition supporting lbn Hazm's assertion is the following, reported by Ibn Jarir [al-Tabar], Abu Ya'la in his Musnad, and Abu Dawud in his Nasikh, on the authority of 'Ali b. Abi Talib, who said, "If it were not for 'Umar's precedent, I would have decided that the mut'a is lawful, and consequently no one would have fornicated except a scoundrel."[71]

These two traditions contain more than one source of proof that it was 'Umar who prohibited the mut'a:

1. The testimony of a Companion and of 'Ali b. Abi Talib prove that the prohibition of the mut'a was not in force during the lifetime of the Prophet, nor following his death, until 'Umar declared it unlawful in accordance with his personal opinion.

2. The witnessing of the mut 'a contract in the first tradition by the responsible persons and their failure to admonish against it suggest that they regarded it as permissible.

3. The silence of 'Umar occurred in the face of the Syrian's claim that the Prophet had not forbidden it.

4. 'Umar's statement to the Syrian, "If I had already declared its prohibition, then I would have [certainly] stoned you," is a clear statement that 'Umar had not already declared its prohibition before this story. In other words, 'Umar admitted that the mut'a was not forbidden before that time.

5. 'Umar's statement, "Make this [prohibition] known so that marriage (nikah) will be distinguished from fornication (sifah),"confirms that the mut'a was widespread among Muslims. Thus, 'Umar wanted his prohibition of it to be made known to them so that they would thereafter be dissuaded from it. Perhaps the [Syrian's] incident in this tradition had directly or indirectly played a role in 'Umar's prohibition of the mut'a. For his disapproval of the Syrian's action, in spite of the testimony of the tradition that the mut'a was widespread among Muslims, added to the fact that the news about it had reached him, although news about such things did not usually reach those who were in power-all these things suggest that there was a factor in the incident that the reporters ignored or neglected, with the consequence that the report did not reach us. Additionally, the report by Salma b. al-Akwa' does not explicitly state that the prohi- bition was made by the Prophet. It is possible to read the word nahi (prohibition) in the tradition in the passive voice,[72] and [to determine] that, as such, it is intended to show that the prohibition came from 'Umar after the death of the Prophet.

Therefore, the traditions do not provide acceptable evidence that establishes that the Prophet prohibited the mut'a. That which establishes that the Prophet had not banned the mut'a is the fact that 'Umar attributed the prohibition to himself when he said, "[The Prophet and the Qur'an] permitted two types of mut'a during the Prophet's time, and I prohibit both of them and I shall punish anyone practicing them."[73] Had the prohibition come from the Prophet, then he would have said, "The Prophet forbade both of them."

Fourth, the permissibility of the mut'a, which is established in the Qur'an and the Sunna, was abrogated by a consensus making it unlawful.

The response to this line of argument is that a consensus has no evidentiary value if it does not reveal the opinion of the infallible Prophet or the Imams. It is well known that the prohibition of the mut'a did not occur during the time of the Prophet, nor did it occur after him until well into the caliphate of 'Umar. Is it rationally permissible to reject [a ruling of] the Book of God and the Sunna of His Prophet by means of a fatwa (legal opinion) of a group of persons who were not divinely protected from error? If this were to be admissible, it would then be possible to abrogate all the rulings stated in the Qur'an or established in the absolutely reliable Sunna. In other words, this entails the permissibility of abrogating the obligatoriness of the daily worship or the fasting or the annual pilgrimage,

in accordance with the opinions of the scholars (mujtahidun). Such a thing cannot be accepted by any Muslim.

Moreover, there has not been a full consensus on the question of the unlawfulness of the mut'a. How could anyone claim a consensus on this matter when a large group of Muslims, including Companions of the Prophet, disagreed with this view before and after his death? This is not to mention that the opinion of those who believe in the permissibility of the mut'a is in agreement with the opinion of the Family of the Prophet, from whom God removed all the filth, thereby purifying them completely. Thus, there remains nothing except the prohibition introduced by 'Umar.

To be sure, the Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunna are more worthy than anything else of being followed, and it is for this reason that 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar gave the fatwa allowing tamattu' (indulgence) during the hajj. People asked him, "How can you disagree with your father, who had forbidden it?" In response, he said: "Woe unto you! Are you not afraid of God. . . . Is the Prophet's Sunna worthier of being followed or is it 'Umar's?"[74]

To sum up the preceding: None of the things to which the proponents of abrogation hold fast is appropriate as abrogator of this Qur'anic injunction, whose legality is absolutely proven in Islam.

Stoning as a Penalty for Contracting a Mut'a

It is established in a number of traditions, of which some have been already cited, that 'Umar ordered the stoning as a penalty for the mut'a. Among these traditions is one reported by Jabir. He said:

We used to practice mut'a along with the Messenger of God. When 'Umar assumed authority he said: "Indeed, God made lawful for His Messenger whatever He willed by whatever means He desired. The Qur'an was revealed for this set purpose. Hence, fulfill the pilgrimage and the lesser pilgrimage as He has commanded you, and resolve your marriage to these women. Any man brought to me who has married a woman for a fixed period, I would have him stoned."[75]

Another tradition has been related by al-Shafi'I on the authority of Malik, who received it, through Ibn Shihab, from 'Urwa: that Khawla bint Hukaym came to 'Umar al-Khattab and said, "Rabr'a b. Umayya has contracted a mut'a marriage with a woman, and she has become pregnant from him." 'Umar came out angrily while his cloak dragged, saying, "This mut'a! If I had already declared its prohibition, I would have certainly stoned him."[76]

In a tradition reported by Nafi' from 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar, the latter was asked about the mut'a with women. He said, "It is forbidden. However, if 'Umar b. al-Khattab caught anyone having practiced it, he would stone him."[77]

Ibn al-Zubayr followed this view. When he denied the permissibility of the mut'a, Ibn 'Abbas said to him, "You are rude and uncivil. I solemnly declare that during the time of the leader of the pious"-that is, the Messenger of God-"mut'a was practiced." Ibn al-Zubayr told him, "Go ahead and try it yourself. By God, if you did, I shall stone you with your own stones."[78]

This is indeed strange! How can a Muslim deserve stoning for having differed with 'Umar on a legal point, while supporting his view on the injunction of the Prophet and the text of the Qur'an'? Even if we accept that

this person had committed an error of judgment, would not legal punishments be extenuated in cases of mistakes? In addition, this is merely a hypothetical situation. We have already noted that there is no proof to support the claim of abrogation.

How far is this opinion from the doctrine of Abu Hanifa, who is of the opinion that the legal punishment should be suspended in the case of a man marrying a woman by means of an invalid contract, or marrying a woman who is not lawful for him [because of the degree of consanguinity], and engaging with her in sexual intercourse, though aware of the prohibition and the invalidity of the contract?[79] Moreover, the same doctrine holds that if he hires a woman and then fornicates with her, the penalty is suspended, for God has called the bride's dowry a wage (ajr). Traditions to this effect have been related on the authority of 'Umar b. al-Khattab also.[80]

Assertions Regarding the Mut'a

The author of al-Manar, [Rashid Rida], asserted that mut'a contradicts chastity. Rather, [he said], its primary goal is to fornicate, and it is not chaste for a woman to hire herself every time to a different man, for then she would be like the ball in the following line of a poem:

She is like a ball that is hit with a polo mallet,

Being grabbed from foot to foot.

Moreover, he maintains that it contradicts what God, the Exalted, says in the following passage:

And [those] who guard their modesty-save from their wives or the [slaves] that their right hands possess-they are not blameworthy. But whosoever craves beyond that, such are transgressors (Qur’an 23:5-7).

Then he goes on to state that 'Umar's prohibition did not come from himself. Even if it is true that he attributed it to himself, this would mean only that he elucidated its prohibition or that he carried it out. Having said that, the author expresses his regret that he wrote in al-Manar that 'Umar forbade mut'a on the basis of his ijtihad [personal judgment] and that the other Companions agreed.[81]

In response to these assertions, we say:

His contention that the mut'a is incompatible with chastity is based on his claim that the woman would not be a real wife. We already explained the error of this view, and this exposes the further error that mut'a is incompatible with guarding one's modesty except against a spouse.

As for his interpretation of the mut 'a as being equivalentto a woman's hiring herself out, and his comparison of a woman with a ball that is grabbed by different hands, if this is true, it disputes the legality of this kind of marriage, which was prevalent during the lifetime of the Prophet. The reason is that such a comparison and disapprobation do not apply to one period to the exclusion of another. In addition, no Muslim doubts that mut'a was permissible during the time of the Prophet, and, as established earlier, it is known that the permission continued until well into the time of 'Umar.

It is strange that the author [of al-Manar] at this point states that he does not wish to express anything except the truth and that he is not influenced by sectarian prejudice. Yet his prejudice leads him to denounce what has been established in the Islamic law through a specific text in the Qur'an, as

well as in the Sunna and by the consensus of Muslims, which holds true even if they disagree over its abrogation or continuation. Moreover, if the transfer of a woman from man to man is abominable, it should then deter divorce in a permanent marriage, since that would transfer the woman to the protection of another man, as well as transfer a woman through ownership. No Muslim has voiced objection to this, but the author of al-Manar is free to make this objection because he is of the opinion that slavery should be prohibited and that, in its permissibility, there are many causes of corruption. He asserts that prominent jurists had neglected to mention that. Moreover, he maintains that a permanent marriage was invalid if the husband, from the beginning, intended divorce following the marriage. In that, he has diverged from the legal opinion of other Muslim jurists.

Equally strange is the way he explains 'Umar's admission that the prohibition of mut'a was his own decision, for it does not support what he, the author of al-Maniir, asserts. Certainly, 'Umar's proclamation of the prohibition must have been either a personal judgment of his own contradiction of the Prophet's opinion, or a personal judgment ascribing the prohibition to the Prophet, or a report on his authority related from the Prophet regarding the prohibition.

As for the possibility that 'Umar' s view was a tradition reported from the Prophet about the prohibition, this is not supported by the numerous traditions in which 'Umar ascribes the prohibition solely to himself. In addition, if it were indeed a prophetic tradition, then it would contradict all the traditions, reported earlier, that prove that the mut'a remained permissible during a considerable period of 'Umar's caliphate. And where was 'Umar during the caliphate of his predecessor, Abu Bakr? Did he reveal, to Abu Bakr and other Muslims, his report regarding the Prophet's prohibition of mut’a? Moreover, 'Umar's report is a single narrative that does not establish the abrogation.

As for the possibility that 'Umar's view was his own personal judgment that the Prophet had prohibited the mut'a, this also has no meaning after the testimony of a group of the Companions regarding its permissibility during the time of the Prophet until his death. However, his personal judgment is not binding on those, other than himself, who have not been required to follow his judicial decision and his opinion. More pertinently, these two possibilities run contrary to 'Umar's statement in his speech: "As for the two forms of mut'a that were [permissible] during the Prophet's time, I am forbidding them both and I shall punish those who practice them."

Consequently, the matter is reduced to the conclusion that the prohibition was 'Umar's personal judgment against the Prophet's declaration regarding its permissibility. It was for this reason that the community did not follow him in his prohibition of mut'a [indulgence] during the hajj and in establishing the maximum legal penalty for the mut'a. It is incumbent on the community to follow the Prophet's statement and reject all personal judgments that go against it, as God says: "And it is not a believing man or a believing woman, when God and His Messenger have decided an affair [for them], that they should [after that] claim any say in their affair" (Qur’an 33:36). In this connection, the Messenger of God said, "I do not make

anything unlawful except if God had made it unlawful."[82] In another place he said, "I solemnly declare, in the name of the One in Whose hand is my life, that nothing but the truth comes out of it [i.e., his mouth]."[83]

In spite of all this, al-Qushji, in his apology for 'Umar' s prohibition of the mut'a, in disagreement with the Prophet, says, "This [action of 'Umar] does not call for condemnation, for it is not an innovation if a mujtahid disagrees with other mujtahids on a question that is open to interpretation."[84]

According to al-Amidi:

Scholars have disagreed regarding the question of whether the Prophet used to follow his own personal judgment in those matters in which there was no explicit text [in the Qur'an]. Ahmad b. Hanbal and al-Qadi Abu Yusuf maintain that the Prophet used to follow his personal judgment. . . . Al-Shafi' , in his Risala, regards it as permissible, but without giving an absolute ruling in this matter. Some associates of al-Shafi', as well as al-Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar and Abu al-Husayn al-Basri, have maintained a similar opinion."

Al-Amidi then adds, "My own preference is to maintain the permissibility of that, both on the basis of reason and on the basis of its having occurred in the reports [related about that]."[85]

Al-Amidi also says: "Those who maintain the permissibility of ijtihad for the Prophet have disagreed on the possibility of error for him in his ijtihad. According to some of our associates, [error] is impossible, whereas the majority of them, as well as the Hanbalites and the scholars of tradition, and al-Jubba'i and a group of the Mu'tazilites, have maintained that it is possible, but with the provision that he does not remain on that error; and this [in our opinion] is the preferred view."[86]

To conclude, the verse about the mut 'a does not have an abrogator, and 'Umar' s prohibition, and the agreement of a group of the Companions with his opinion, whether made willingly or unwillingly, were based on his personal opinion against the text of the Qur'an. This was indeed conceded by some, and there is no proof of the prohibition of mut'a except 'Umar's proscription. Those [who complied with his prohibition] had deemed it appropriate to follow the practice of the caliphs, as they had followed that of the Prophet.[87] At any rate, the best statement is that of 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar: "Is the Prophet's Sunna worthier of being followed or is it 'Umar's [proscription]?" And how apt is the statement of Muhiammad 'Abduh in his commentary on the verse "Divorce [is allowed] twice"? [Qur’an 2:229].[88]

(14) And to each We have appointed heirs of that which parents and near kindred leave; and as for those with whom your right hands have made a covenant, give them their due. Lo! God is ever witness over all things. (Qur’an 4:33)

Opinions have varied on the meaning of this verse. According to some of them, the phrase "and as for those with whom your right hands have made a covenant" is independent of the rest; thus, they have regarded it as a fresh phrase. They have variously interpreted the word nasib (here meaning "due") to mean "help," "advice," "support," "aid," "reason," "counsel," and so on. This not withstanding, the verse is precise and unabrogated. This opinion is ascribed to lbn 'Abbas, to Mujahid, and to Sa'id b. Jubayr.[89]

Others maintain that the independent phrase is an explicative adjunct of the verse, and they interpret the word na!b as that which is due to an heir from the estate. But beyond this point they disagree. Some of them maintain that the purport, in the verse, of "a covenant" made by the "right hands" is the pledge of brotherhood and similar pacts, which, before Islam, entitled the persons concerned to inherit from each other. Islam confirmed this practice until the revelation of the inheritance verse, which states, "And those who are akin are nearer to one another in the ordinance of God" (Qur'an 8:75). Accordingly, [some maintain], the verse under discussion is abrogated [by this latter verse].[90]

Another group is of the opinion that "a covenant" made by the "right hands" refers specifically to the pact of security (jarira). [91] Hence, if we follow the opinion of the majority of the Sunni scholars, according to whom inheritance is not established on the basis of the pact of security, then the verse becomes abrogated by the inheritance verse.[92] But if we follow the opinion of Abu Hanifa and his associates, who establish the right to inherit on the basis of this pact, then the verse is precise and unabrogated.

This latter group has argued that the inheritance verse does not deny inheritance to those who are not near of kin, but only gives preference to those who are. Hence, there is no contradiction between the two verses, and the inheritance verse [therefore cannot] be the abrogator of this verse. [93]

The fact is that the purport of the verse is exactly what is conveyed by its apparent sense-namely, that inheritance is admissible through a mutual contract or agreement. Nevertheless, abrogation of the verse is not established. To elaborate, the context of the passage makes it necessary that the nasib (due share) mentioned in it is the inheritance. To explain the term nasib as "aid," or as some other such notion, is to go against the apparent sense of the verse, which is so clear as to be almost explicit.

Moreover, the enumeration of the three categories [parents, near of kin, and those who are contractually related to the deceased] in the verse does not mean they are partners or equals in the same category. To be sure, a son inherits his parents, and none of the relatives among the near of kin of the deceased inherit with him [as long as the son is present]. That which actually emerges from the verse is only that the heirs are the ones who belong to these three categories. As for the order of their inheritance and the precedence of one category over the other, nothing can be deduced from this verse. Rather, they have been deduced from other evidence in the Qur'an and from the sunna.

From what has been mentioned here thus far, the verse briefly mentions all the categories of heirs: Hence, children inherit from what has been left by the parents; the relatives among the near of kin inherit from each other; and the one who has an agreement with the deceased inherits with the rest, either in partnership or in order of precedence [in accordance with the terms of the agreement].

To elaborate, inheritance through other than kinship must be established through a proper contract and a commitment on the part of the person agreeing to it through an oath or his power. Such an agreement could result from marriage, in which case both spouses inherit from each other on the

strength of the marriage contract that has come into effect between them. At other times, it could result from a contract of allegiance and dependency and is known as "allegiance and loyalty to the leadership." There is no disagreement that this kind of inheritance became an established right of the Messenger of God. Numerous traditions reported by Sunnis relate that he said, "I am the heir of those who have no heirs."[94]

There is also no question that this kind of inheritance became a legitimate right of the Prophet's legatees [the Imams], for it has been established, by means of absolute proof, that they occupy the same position as he did. The Imamite doctrine and the traditions reported from the ahl al-bayt are unanimous on this point.

Contractual inheritance is effected sometimes through manumission. The manumitter inherits from his freed slave on the basis of the fealty of freedom. Among the Imamite scholars, there is no dispute over this kind of contract, and others also have upheld it. At other times, contractual inheritance is effected through a pact of security. This kind of agreement is called "fealty of security under guilt." The Imamite scholars recognize inheritance on the basis of this fealty, as do Abu Hanifa and his associates [among the Hanafite jurists].

To recapitulate, any claim that the verse has been abrogated depends on the estab- lishment of two factors:

1. That God's saying "And as for those with whom your right hands have made a cove- nant, give them their due" (Qur'an 4:33) is connected with what preceded it, and is not a fresh phrase that signifies that the word nafb conveys a sense of counsel, advice, and other related senses.

2. That a "covenant" made by "right hands" in the verse refers to the "fealty of security under guilt," but with the requirement that it entails no inheritance, or to the "fealty of brotherhood" and such other allegiances that, in accordance with the agreement among Muslims, do not entail inheritance.

As for the first factor, there is no doubt about it, for it is what the context of the verse establishes. As for the second factor, it is prohibited, because "fealty of security under guilt" is one of the criteria of the "covenant" made by "right hands." Nevertheless, its ruling has not been abrogated. The assertion that the "covenant" made by "right hands" refers to contracts which do not make inheritance binding, such as the fealty of brotherhood and similar agreements, is not supported by evidence.

(15) O, you who believe! Draw not near to prayer when you are drunken, till you know that which you utter. (Qur'an 4:43)

Most scholars maintain that this verse has been abrogated,[95] but they disagree over its abrogator. Hence, it is reported, on the authority of Qatada and Mujahid, that this verse has been abrogated by the prohibition of wine [in Qur'an 5:92]. This opinion has been related from al-Hasan also.[96] According to lbn 'Abbas, the passage was abrogated by the following verse: "When you rise up for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows" (Qur'an 5:6).

Both views are clearly wrong. As for the first view, there is no indication whatsoever in the verse about the permissibility of wine-drinking. Moreover, even if it is presumed that wine was not yet prohibited when this

verse was revealed, the terms in the verse do not deal with the ordinance regarding wine-drinking, whether to permit it or prohibit it. Furthermore, a mere presumption does not establish a fact. For, in a tradition related on the authority of 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar, he is reported to have said:

Three verses were revealed in connection with wine. The first thing that came down was, "They question you about strong drink (khamr) and games of chance. Say [that] in both is great sin, and [some] utility for men; but the sin of them is greater than their usefulness" (Qur'an 2:219). Thus it was said, "Wine is prohibited." People approached the Prophet, saying, "O Messenger of God, allow us to benefit from it as God, the Exalted, said." The Prophet did not answer them. Then the verse under consideration was revealed: "Draw not near to prayer when you are drunken."[97]

A similar account has been related on the authority of Abu Hurayra.[98] Abu Maysara has, likewise, related on the authority of 'Umar b. al-Khattab:

When the ordinance regarding the prohibition of wine was revealed, he ['Umar] said, "O, God, elucidate for us in unequivocal terms the matter of wine." Hence, the verse which is in the "Surat al-Baqara" was revealed: "They question you about strong drink (khamr) and games of chance. Say that in both is great sin" (Qur'an 2:219).

'Umar was summoned and the verse was read to him. [He was not satisfied, and he prayed,] saying, "O, God, elucidate for us in unequivocal terms the matter of wine." Hence, the verse which is part of the "Surat al-Nisa'" was revealed: "Draw not near to prayer when you are drunken" (Qur'an 4:43).

Henceforth, the Prophet's crier, when calling people for the prayer, used to announce, "Do not draw near to prayer drunken." [Once again,] 'Umar was summoned and the verse was read to him. [Again he was not satisfied, and he prayed,] saying, "O God, elucidate for us in unequivocal terms the matter of wine." Hence, the verse which is part of "Surat al-Ma'ida" was revealed. Once more 'Umar was summoned and the verse was read to him: ["Satan seeks only to cast among you enmity and hatred by means of strong drink" (Qur'an 5:91)]. When the phrase "Will you then have done with?" was reached, 'Umar said, "We have done with! We have done with!"[99]

Al-Nasa'i has also reported this tradition, with little variation in its wording.[100]

As for the second view, [which considers that the verse was abrogated by the verse about the ablution], the obligation to perform the ablution before the prayer has no relation to the subject of the verse under discussion as its abrogator.

It is possible that those who hold the view that this verse has been abrogated are under the delusion that the prohibition to draw close to prayer in a state of intoxication necessitates that the state of intoxication in question should be one which falls short of the stage where a person becomes neglectful of the obligations and their performance and therefore fails to pay attention to them. Accordingly, if the intoxication reaches that stage, it would be inappropriate to require him to perform his obligations. Moreover, since we assume that a person drinking wine gets to the point of becoming intoxicated to this extent, and is still held responsible by the

consensus among the scholars for carrying out the obligation of the prayer, this necessarily requires the abrogation of the purport of the verse.

However, this opinion is certainly an erroneous assumption, because the mean- ing of intoxication, as the phrase "till you know that which you utter" (Qur’an 4:43) suggests, is [that it reaches a] stage when the intoxication causes a loss of consciousness, and this prohibition may be taken to mean obligatory unlawfulness. As such, it is not negated by the loss of consciousness. The reason is that even if the performance of the prayer in this state is impossible, the loss of the consciousness is still of the person's own free will. Accordingly, the validity of punishment cannot reasonably be nullified in the case of a person who has willingly refrained from carrying out his obligation. Hence, the linkage of prohibition with it is sound before he willingly gets drunk. There are many such examples in the Shari'a.

On the other hand, the prohibition may be a way of pointing out that the prayer, [uttered] in such a state of intoxication, would not be valid. This is what appears from the phrasing of the verse. The validity of this suggestion is quite evident. At any rate, there is no reason that makes it necessary to adopt the view that the verse was abrogated.

[Choose not any of them as friend or helper] except those who seek refuge with a people between whom and you there is a covenant, or [those who] come to you because their hearts forbid them to make war on their own folk. Had God willed He could have given them power over you so that assuredly they would have fought you. So, if they hold aloof from you and wage not war against you and offer you peace, God allows you no way against them. (Qur’an 4:90)

It has been maintained that this verse has been abrogated by the command to repudiate the treaty with the nonbelievers and the order to fight them regardless of whether they isolate themselves from the Muslims or not-hence, there are two factors in the verse for its abrogation.

The response [to this is as follows]. This passage was revealed in connection with the hypocrites who had turned their backs and rejected faith after having outwardly become Muslims. This is indicated by the context of the verse, for [in the previous two verses] God, the Exalted, says:

What ails you that you are become two parties regarding the hypocrites, when God cast them back [to disbelief] because of what they earned? Seek you to guide him whom God has sent astray? He whom God sends astray, for him you [O Muhiammad] cannot find a road (Qur’an 4:88). They long that you should disbelieve, that you may be upon a level [with them]. So choose not friends from them till they forsake their homes in the way of God: If they turn back [to enmity], then take them and kill them wherever you find them, and choose no friend nor helper from among them (Qur’an 4:89). Except those who seek refuge. . . . (Qur’an 4:90).

Hence, the ordinance in the passage applies to the apostates (al-murtaddun) who were nonbelievers, [who] then converted to Islam, and then, again, reverted to disbelief. The ruling about them, as stipulated in the passage, is: kill them except in two cases:

1. If they were to seek refuge with a people who [have a covenant with] the Muslims, and to whom they appeal for protection. In such a case, the

same ruling applies to them as it applies to the group from whom they have sought protection, in accordance with the terms of the covenant. However, this ruling is conditional on the validity of the covenant. Thus, if the covenant between them and the Muslims is revoked, the ruling would lose its object. We explained, at the beginning of this discussion, that a ruling which is revoked because of the termination of its object has no relation to abrogation whatsoever. The covenant between the Muslims and the disbelievers was revoked in "Surat al-Tawba" (sura 9). They were given four months to choose between converting to Islam or leaving the Muslim domain. Accordingly, there remained no ground for seeking the kind of protection the verse mentions.

2. If they come to the Muslims with their hearts deterred from fighting, and if they withdraw from the conflict and offer peace to the Muslims after their rebellion. Submitting, here, means accepting Islam outwardly and bearing testimony to the two fold formula for faith. This explanation is substantiated by God's saying, "And say not, to one who offers you peace, 'You are not a believer,' seeking the chance of profits of this life [so that you may despoil him]" (Qur’an 4:94). The verse indicates the acceptance of, and adherence to, Islam, and that [an apostate] should not be killed after his repentance. The position ultimately taken by the Imamite school is that there is no verse in the Qur'an that indicates an unqualified obligation to kill an apostate [i.e., whether he repents or not], and that would serve as abrogator of the verse under discussion.

However, if those who maintain its abrogation intend to cling, in proving their view, to those verses which call for fighting the polytheists and unbelievers, then, evidently, that is conditional upon the continuance of the object of the ruling [which is the continuation of disbelief], as is the case with the principle followed in all concrete cases in [regard to] the Shari'a-related and other ordinances. It is true that an unqualified injunction to kill an apostate has been reported in some traditions related by Sunni sources. Thus, al-Bukhari, Ahmad b. Hanbal, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasa'i, Abu Dawud al-Sijistani, and Ibn Maja report, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, that the Prophet said, "Anyone who changes his religion, kill him." [101]

Nevertheless, there is no disagreement among Muslims that this ruling is conditional on the refusal to repent, although there is a disagreement among them over the period during which [the apostate] should be asked to repent, and whether it should be obligatory to ask him to repent or only be recommended. The prevailing view among the Imamites is that it is obligatory and not limited to a specific period; rather, he should be called upon to repent as long as it is possible for him to reconvert to Islam. It has been said, however, that he should be given only three days to repent. This opinion is attributed to some Imamite scholars and has been adopted by many Sunni scholars. Abu Hanifa and Abu Yusuf are of the opinion that a grace period of three days should be recommended. Nevertheless, 'Ali b. Abi Bakr al-Marghinani maintained that it was obligatory to kill an apostate without delay. Ibn al-Humam attributes to al-Shafi'i and Ibn al-Mundhir that they both said, regarding the apostate, "He should repent immediately, or be killed." [102]

In any case, there is no question that the ruling to kill is nullified by repentance, as is stated in traditions reported by both Shi'ites and Sunnis. Hence, the verse [which safeguards the apostate from being put to death] is not to be regarded as having been abrogated.

(17) If then they have recourse to you [Muhammad], judge between them or disclaim jurisdiction. If you disclaim jurisdiction, then they cannot harm you at all. But if you judge, judge between them with equity. (Qur'an 5:42)

Opinions vary on this particular verse. According to some, it is one of the precise (muhkama) verses and has therefore not been abrogated. The Twelver Shi'ites are agreed upon this opinion. Thus, the juridical authority has the discretion, when petitioned by peoples of the Book, whether to judge in accordance with the ruling of the Islamic law, or to disclaim jurisdiction and leave them to follow what their religion requires them to do. Shaykh al-Tusi relates a sound tradition of the Imam Abi[1] Ja'far [al-Baqir], who said, "When a judge is approached by people of the Torah and the Gospel to judge among them, the matter is for his discretion: He can either agree to judge among them if he so desires, or he can disclaim jurisdiction if he so desires." [103] Among SunnI scholars who ·have accepted this opinion are al-Sha'bi, Ibrahim al- Nakha'i, 'Ata', and Malik. [104]

A number of those scholars maintain that the above verse was abrogated by the subsequent revelation: "So judge between them by that which God has revealed, and follow not their desires" (Qur'an 5:48).

It has been related that Mujahid was of the opinion that the passage [in Qur'an 5:42] that gives the judge a choice abrogated the second passage [in Qur'an 5:48].

The fact is that the verse was not abrogated, for the command to judge among the people of the Book in the revelation "So judge between them by that which God has revealed, and follow not their desires" is subject to the judge's willingness to judge among them. The context for this condition is provided by the former verse. Moreover, besides the context of the verse, the last part of the former verse points to this condition: "But if you judge, judge between them with equity. Lo! God loves the equitable." Thus, it establishes the necessity of judging among them with equity, depending on the intention of the judge to judge among them. It is the judge's right to disclaim jurisdiction, in which case the necessity to judge would be nullified by the fact that its precondition [the willingness of the judge] had not been realized. Among the things that support the view that the verse under consideration was not abrogated are the traditions that establish that "Surat al-Ma'ida" [sura 5] was revealed to the Prophet all at one time, and that that was during his journey.

'Isa b. 'Abd Allah has related, from his father and his grandfather, that 'Ali b. Abi Talib said, "Certainly, the "Surat al-Ma'ida" was among the last [suras] to be revealed to the Prophet, and it was revealed while he was riding his camel al-Shahba', who, because of the heaviness of the revelation, had to sit down." [105]

Asma', daughter of Yazid, reported, "I was holding the reins of the Ghadba', the Prophet's camel, when 'al-Ma'ida' was revealed unto him. And

due to the weight of the revelation, the camel was about to fall on its knees." [106]

According to another chain of transmission, Asma' said, "'Al-Ma'ida' was revealed to the Prophet in one piece in such a way that it almost broke the camel's back." [107]

Jubayr b. Nufayr related:

I had performed the pilgrimage and thus I went to see 'A'isha. She asked me if I had read "al-Ma'ida." I said, "Yes." She said, "This was the last sura that was revealed. Whatever is made lawful in it, follow it, and whatever is made unlawful in it, regard it as such."[108]

Abu 'Ubayd reports that Parma b. Habib and 'Aliyya b. Qays related, "The Prophet said, "'Al-Ma'ida" is the last part of the Qur'an to be revealed. Therefore, follow what it makes lawful and refrain from what it makes unlawful. "'[109]

These and other such traditions establish that "al-Ma'ida" was revealed all at once and that it was the last [sura] of the Qur'an to be revealed. Considering these exhaustive traditions, how can anyone claim that one of its verses abrogated another? Moreover, is not this the kind of abrogation that occurs before the time of its application? In that case, the ruling in the abrogated verse is ineffectual, without any benefit in its legislation. Nevertheless, some aforementioned traditions point to the fact that this was the last chapter of the Qur'an to be revealed, and that nothing in its verses could be abrogated.

(18) O you who believe! Let there be witnesses between you when death draws nigh to one of you, at the time of bequest-two witnesses, just men from among you, or two others from among others than you. (Qur’an 5: 106)

The Imami Shi’ites maintain that the verse is precise [in its instruction] and that, hence, it sanctions testimony by the people of the Book on behalf of Muslims on a journey, if that witnessing is in the matter of a testament. This opinion was adopted by a group of Companions and the second generation, among whom are 'Abd Allah b. Qays, lbn 'Abbas, Shurayh, Sa'id b. al-Musayyib, Sa'id b. Jubayr, 'Ubayda, Muhammad b. Sirin, al-Sha'bi, Yahya b. Ya'mar, and al-Suddi. Among the jurists who upheld this view are Sufyan al-Thawri and Abu 'Ubayd. The latter was inclined to al-Thawri's opinion because of the large number of those who maintained this view. However, Zayd b. Aslam, Malik b. Anas, al-Shafi'i, and Abu Hanifa maintained that the verse was abrogated, and that it was not permissible under any condition for a nonbeliever to serve as a witness.[110]

The fact is that the view that the verse was abrogated is false. There are several factors that support such a conclusion:

1. Numerous traditions related by both the Sunnis and the Shi’ites prove the efficaciousness of a testimony by people of the Book in the matter of a testament, when witnessing by a Muslim is impossible. Among these traditions are the following:

a. Al-Kulayni reported from Hisham b. al-Hakam, who received it from the Imam al- Sadiq when the latter explained the meaning of the phrase "or two others from among others than you." The Imam said, "If a man was in a

foreign land where no [other] Muslim is at hand, the witnessing of a non-Muslim of a testament is permissible."[111]

b. Al-Sha'bi related:

A Muslim was about to die in Daquqa and could find no Muslim who would bear witness to his testament. So he called upon two men from the people of the Book to witness it. [After he died], these two men came to Kufa and went to Abu Musa al-Ash'ari [the governor of Kufa], and informed him about the will and turned over the deceased person's bequest and his testament. Al-Ash'ari said, "This is something that has not occurred since the time of the Prophet." Following the afternoon prayers, he made them take an oath that they had not cheated, lied, [or] substituted, concealed, or changed [the bequest], and that it was definitely the testament and the bequest left by [that] person. Hence, he endorsed their witnessing.[112]

2. All the abovementioned traditions that state that "Surat al-Ma'ida" was revealed all at once, and that it was the last of the revelations, and that it does not contain anything that was abrogated.

3. That abrogation cannot be established without a reason that indicates it. All the reasons provided by those who maintain that the verse was abrogated do not estab- lish that. Among these reasons are the following:

a. God, the Almighty, has required of a witness that he be just and acceptable, as He says, "Such as you approve as witnesses" (Qur’an 2:282); "and call to witness two just men among you" (Qur’an 65:2). A nonbeliever, however, is neither just nor acceptable. As such, [they say], the injunction regarding the permission of accepting the testimony of a nonbeliever must be regarded as [having been] abrogated.

The response [to this is as follows]. The first verse [Qur’an 2:282] is revealed in the context of a debt, and the second [Qur’an 65:2] is revealed in the context of a divorce. Accordingly, there is no argument to support their applicability in the case of a last will and testament. Furthermore, even if it were to be admitted that these two verses are general in application, it remains that the previous verse was meant to set a restriction on them; and the general [application] does not abrogate the restriction on it--- more particularly, when the restriction is chronologically subsequent to it, as is the case here.

b. There is a consensus that the testimony of a sinful person (fasiq) cannot be admitted. A nonbeliever is a transgressor; hence, his testimony cannot be admitted.

The response [to this is as follows]. There is no meaning in reverting to the consensus when the majority of scholars are of the opinion that the testimony of a non-believer is permissible. This was established in the foregoing, and there is no rational congruity between the rejection of the testimony of a sinful Muslim and the rejection of the testimony of a nonbeliever who is morally sound in his religion.

c. The testimony of a nonbeliever is not admissible for Muslims except in matters related to a testament, and there is a disagreement on whether it is admissible even in cases of a testament. Consequently, the matter over which there is a dispute must be referred [for a decision] to the matter over which there is a consensus.

The response [to this is as follows]. This argument is extremely strange in the light of the evidence that the testimony in the matter of the will is admitted without any objection. The person who holds this view should have reversed his statement to say that the testimony of a nonbeliever in the will was acceptable during the Prophet's time, as established by a consensus, and the dispute occurred only after that period. Hence the dispute in this matter should be referred to that on which there is a consensus.

Consequently, there is nothing to support the claim that the verse was abrogated except the acceptance by a group of later jurists of the opinion to that effect. How can one relinquish an injunction that is stated in the Qur'an on the strength of a legal decision made by one of the people contrary to it? More confounding is the opinion, maintained by al-Hasan [al-Bari] and al-Zuhri, that the purport of God's saying, "Or two others from among others than you" (5:106) is "two others from another tribe." Hence, they conclude, there is no evidence in the verse that the testimony of nonbelievers is admissible.[113]

That which refutes such an opinion, in addition to the traditions related in connection with the interpretation of the verse, is the very fact that it is contrary to the apparent text of the Qur'an. This is because the verse is certainly addressed to the believers, and, accordingly, when God says, "Others than you" it necessarily means other than the believers-that is, the nonbelievers.

To be sure, the general sense of the verse indicates the acceptance of the testimony of nonbelievers in the matter of the last will, even if they were not from the people of the Book, and regardless of whether Muslim witnesses were available or not. However, the numerous traditions on the subject limit this to the testimony of a person belonging to the people of the Book, and only to cases when Muslims are not available for witnessing. This is one of the contexts in which a general injunction in the Book is restricted by the prophetic tradition.

(19) He it is who produces gardens trellised and untrellised, and the date-palm, and crops of diverse flavors, and the olive and the pomegranate, like and unlike. Eat you of the fruit thereof when it fruits, and pay the due thereof upon the harvest day, and be not prodigal! Lo! God loves not the prodigals. (Qur’an 6:141)

The majority of Sunni scholars are of the opinion that the above passage has been abrogated. They mention several reasons for its abrogation.

1. That it was revealed concerning the zakat (obligatory alms), and that its obligatory aspect, according to the generally accepted opinion, was abrogated for items other than wheat, barley, and raisins. Moreover, there is no one among the Companions of the Prophet, both in the first and second generations, who maintains that the zakat is obligatory for any of the earth's produce. However, Abu Hanifa and Zafar have adopted the opinion that it is obligatory for items other than firewood, herbs, and reeds. [114]

2. The verse's ordinance was abrogated by the Sunna, which mentions the tithe ('ushr) and the half-tithe [that were collected from Muslim farmers, just as the kharaj was collected from non-Muslim farmers]. This opinion was

maintained by al-Suddi and Anas b. Malik, and has been ascribed to Ibn 'Abbas and Muhammad b. al- Hanafiyya.[115]

3. The context of the passage is not the zakat; moreover, the obligation to give something from one's goods was abrogated by the obligation of the zakat. This opinion was held by 'Ikrima and al-Dahhak, and was ascribed also to Sa'id b. Jubayr.[116]

The truth is that the view that the purport of the verse was abrogated is not valid.

There are several reasons for that.

First, numerous traditions, reported on the authority of the Imams, indicate that the payable "due" mentioned in the verse is not the zakat, and that the ruling is still applicable and has not been abrogated. Among these traditions is one mentioned by al-Kulayni, whose chain of transmission is traced back to Mu'awiya b. al-Hajjaj, who said:

I heard the Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) say, "Concerning untrellised produce, two kinds of payments are due: One is taken from you and one you pay yourself." I asked the Imam, "What kind is taken from me and what kind is the one that I pay?" The Imam replied, "That which is taken from you is the 'ushr (tithe) and the half- 'ushr. As for what you pay, it is what God intended when He said, 'And pay the due thereof upon the harvest day.'"[117]

Ibn Mardawayh relates, on the authority of Abu Sa'id al-Khudari, that the Prophet said, about the same passage, "[Pay the due on] that which has fallen from the spike [of the grain at the harvest time]."[118]

Second, the "Surat al-An'am" [sura 6] was revealed in Mekka all at once. Many traditions speak of this-among them is one reported by al-Kulayni, tracing his transmission back to al-Hasan b. 'Ali b. Abu Hamza. He said:

The Imam al- Sadiq said that "Surat al-An'am" was revealed all at once, having been escorted by seventy thousand angels until it was brought down to Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny). Therefore, exalt it and honor it, for God's name is mentioned in seventy places in it. If people were to know the virtues ofreciting it, they would not leave it ever.[119]

Another tradition is reported on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas. He said, "The 'Surat al-An'am' was revealed in Mekka all at once during the night, having been surrounded by seventy thousand angels, fervently praying around it with the praises [of God]."[120] What is certain is that the obligation to pay the zakat was revealed in Medina.

Accordingly, how can one say that the verse in question was revealed in connection with the zakat? Al-Zajjaj relates that it is said that the passage was revealed in Medina.[121] This opinion is contrary to the numerous earlier traditions, and it is, moreover, an uninformed opinion.

Third, the payment ordained in the verse is to be made on "the harvest day." Therefore, it has to be something other than the zakat, because the latter is paid after cleaning and measuring. Another point that proves that this payment due is not the zakat is [provided by] the traditions reported, on the authority of the Imams, regarding the prohibition to harvest during the night, [which was done], according to some of these traditions, [so that] the poor and the unfortunate [would not be] deprived of their share.[122] [In fact],

Ja'far b. Muhammad b. Ibrahim relates on the authority of Ja'far Muhammad [al-Sadiq], who heard from his father-and the latter, from his grandfather-that the Prophet prohibited harvesting dates and other produce at night. Explaining the reason, Ja'far said, "He did that for the sake of the poor."[123]

As for what is said in explaining the meaning of this part of the verse-namely, that it is possible that "harvest day" refers to the time when the payable dues are calculated, not the time when they are paid-this is certainly erroneous. The reason is [twofold]:

1. This is surely contrary to the apparent sense of the verse as understood by common usage of the language, and, in fact, is almost contrary to its explicit sense. The reason is that ["harvest day"] is attached to the meaning of the verb, and not to its form. Thus, when, [for example], it is said, "Pay respect to Zayd on Friday," it means that Friday is the day on which the respect is to be paid, and not the time at which it becomes obligatory.

2. The zakat does not become obligatory on harvest day; rather, the [payment] due becomes attached to the goods when the seeds begin to form and the name of wheat or barley becomes applicable to them. Consequently, the mention of "harvest day" in the verse is a definitive proof that this [payment] due is not the zakat. Another thing which confirms that the [payment] due is not the zakat is that God, the Exalted, has forbidden extravagance in this verse. Such an injunction is not in harmony with the zakat, which was already fixed at a tenth and half a tenth [of untrellised produce]. Once it is clear that the [item] due, which the verse ordains for payment, is other than the obligatory zakat, then the zakat cannot be regarded as abrogating it.

In short, the claim to the abrogation of the passage depends on proving that there is another payment due on the crops so that it would be abrogated by the zakat obligation. However, those who maintain the abrogation cannot establish that because the ostensible sense of an imperative is obligation, and the ostensible meaning of obligation is continuity and perpetuity. It is not possible to uphold both these aspects together in the verse. To be sure, there is no other payment due after the zakat. Therefore, one is necessarily faced with disposing of one of the two ostensible senses: first, denying the obligatory aspect of the ordinance but accept the ruling as continuous and everlasting, which entails that a recommended payment [rather than an obligatory one] is instituted forever; and second, denying the continuous and everlasting aspect of the injunction but accepting its obligatory aspects. This entails that the ruling will eventually be abrogated. There is nothing to make the second position preponderate over the first one; rather, the preponderance is for the first position. Two points provide evidence for this preponderance:

1. The numerous traditions reported on the authority of the infallible Imams reveal the continuation of this [payment] due as a recommended action. We discussed these traditions previously.

2. Had this due been obligatory, knowledge of it would have spread among the Companions and the subsequent generations of the Muslims, and would not have been restricted to 'Ikrima, al-Dahhak, or to one or two others.

To conclude, the opinion that is to be accepted is that there existed another recommended [payment] due regarding fruits and crops. This is the opinion of the Imamite Shi'ites, and hence, there is no reason to maintain the abrogation of this particular passage.

(20) Say: I do not find, in what is revealed to me, aught forbidden to him who eats thereof except [if] it be carrion, or blood outpoured, or the flesh of swine-that is an abomination, or an ungodly thing that has been hallowed to other than God; yet [to] whoso is constrained, not desiring, nor transgressing, surely your Lord is All-forgiving, All- compassionate. (6: 145).

According to a group of scholars, this passage was abrogated by the Prophet's subsequent prohibition of certain things that are not mentioned in this verse.

The truth is that no abrogation occurred concerning this verse. This is because the purport of the verse is to declare that the only forbidden food is that mentioned in it, and it includes only such foods that were forbidden at the time of its revelation. Moreover, there is no ground for claiming that it was abrogated, for abrogation does not occur with declarative sentences. Consequently, this leads to one of two conclusions: first, that the restriction in the verse is incidental. Indeed, the nonbelievers had forbidden themselves certain items, and these were not forbidden in the divine law. This is indicated by the narrative of the previous verses. The second possible conclusion is that it should be required that the restriction in the verse be essential, and that the forbidden items at the time of the revelation of this passage were limited to those mentioned in it. This verse belongs to the Mekka period of revelation, and after its revelation several other things were prohibited, for the rulings used to be revealed gradually.

It is clear that prohibition of one thing after another does not mean abrogation of a thing. Moreover, the restriction being essential makes it the weightier of the two possibilities mentioned above, and the closer one to the customary understanding. Nevertheless, there was no abrogation in the meaning of the passage, even if the restriction was incidental, as clarified.

(21) O you who believe! When you meet those who disbelieve in battle, turn not your backs to them. Who so on that day turned his back to them, unless maneuvering for battle or intent to join a company, he truly has incurred wrath from God, and his habitation will be hell, a hapless journey's end. (Qur'an 8:15-16)

According to some scholars, this passage was abrogated by the following one, in which God, the Exalted, says:

Now has God lightened your burden, for He knows that there is weakness in you. So if there be of you a steadfast hundred, they shall overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a thousand [steadfast], they shall overcome two thousand by permission of God. God is with the steadfast (Qur'an 8:66).

Thus, if Muslims were less than half the number of the disbelievers, they would be permitted to leave the battle and flee from the army. Among those who upheld this view is 'Ata' b. Abi Rayyah.[124]

The response [to this is as follows]. The restriction of the general sense of this passage with the verse about "lightening your burden" ensures the continuation of its ruling. In other words, running away from the army is forbidden in the Islamic law if the number of the Muslims is not less than the number of the disbelievers. But if the number of the Muslims is less than that, then it is not forbidden for them to run away. This does not constitute abrogation at all.

It is reported from 'Amr b. 'Umar, Abu Hurayra, Abu Sa'id, Abu Nadra, Nafi' (the client of Ibn 'Umar), al-Hasan al-Basri, 'Ikrima, Qatada, Zayd b. Abi Habib, and al-Dahhak that the ordinance was meant especially for the people who participated in the battle of Badr, and that it is not forbidden for anyone else to flee from the army. This is also the opinion of Abu Hanifa.[125]

This is an erroneous opinion, for had the context been Badr, this would not necessitate that the ruling should be intended exclusively for Badr, especially since the terms are general and the declaration addresses all Muslims-more particularly, at the time when the passage was revealed, after the fighting on the Day of Badr had ended.[126]

Ibn 'Abbas,[127] all the Imamite Shi’ites, and many Sunni scholars maintain that the verse is precise, and that its injunction remains enforced until the Day of Judgment.

This is certainly the correct opinion, as the evidence is provided by numerous traditions related by both Sunni and Shi’ite sources.

Al-Kulayni relates a tradition he traces back to Muhammad, who reported, about the Imam al-Sadiq: "I heard him say, 'The seven grave sins are: killing a believer intentionally; false accusation of an unblemished woman; fleeing from a battle; adoption of Arab customs after the emigration; squandering the wealth of an orphan; consuming usury after the clear proof [regarding its illicitness]; and performing all that for which God has promised the Fire.'"[128]

Abu Hurayra reports:

I heard the Prophet say, "Avoid seven grave offenses." They asked him, "What are they, O Messenger of God?" He said, "Associating someone with God; magic; killing a person whose killing God has forbidden except for a just cause; consuming usury; squandering the possessions of an orphan; fleeing from fighting; and falsely accusing unblemished women." [129]

(22) And if they incline to peace, incline you also to it. (Qur’an 8:61)

This verse, according to Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid, Zayd b. Aslam, 'Na', 'Ikrima, al-Hasan [al-BarI], and Qatada, was abrogated by the sword (al-sayf) verse [9:5].[130]

The fact is that the verse under question here is precise, and hence, was not abro- gated. The following are some reasons that establish that.

First, the sword verse was intended specifically for the mushrikun (nonbelievers), and not others, as we already mentioned. It was for this reason that the Prophet made peace with the Christians of Najran in the tenth year of the Hijra,[131] in spite of the fact that the "Surat al-Bara'a" was revealed in the previous year (9 A.H./630 C.E.). Thus, the sword verse should be regarded as a particularizer of the general terms in the abovementioned verse, and not its abrogator.

Second, the obligation to fight the nonbelievers, and not to conciliate [differences] with them, is limited to the situation in which the Muslims have the power and the ability to fight. But when they do not have the power to enable them to gain the upper hand over their enemy, then there is no objection to conciliation, as the Prophet did with the Quraysh at the time of Hudaybiyya [outside Mekka in the year 6/628). This limitation is indicated in God's saying, "So do not falter and cry out for peace when you [will be] the uppermost, and God is with you, and He will not grudge [the reward of] your actions" (Qur'an 47:35).

(23) O, Prophet! Exhort the believers to fight. If there be of you twenty steadfast, they shall overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a hundred steadfast, they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve, because they [the disbelievers] are a folk without intelligence. (Qur'an 8:65)

Now has God lightened your burden, for He knows there is weakness in you. So if there be of you a steadfast hundred, they shall overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a thousand [steadfast], they shall overcome two thousand by permission of God. God is with the steadfast. (Qur'an 8:66)

It has been mentioned that the injunction in verse 65 was abrogated by verse 66, because in the beginning it was obligatory that the Muslims fight the disbelievers even if they were ten times more than them. Afterward, God lightened the burden for the Muslims and made the battle obligatory on the condition that the number of the disbelievers should not be more than twice the number of Muslims.

The fact is that there was no abrogation in the ordinance. The assertion of abrogation depends upon proving that the two verses were revealed separately. Moreover, it should be established that the subsequent verse was revealed after the earlier verse had gone into effect; otherwise, the abrogation would have occurred before the time when the earlier verse was needed and would have in effect turned the first verse into a mistake. No one who maintains that the verse in question was abrogated can prove either of the above points except by means of single-narration traditions, which, as we have frequently pointed out, cannot, according to the consensus among Muslim scholars, establish abrogation.[132] In addition, the narrative of the two verses is the best evidence that they were revealed at the same time.

Consequently, the ordinance that twenty persons should fight two hundred is a recommended ruling. As such, how can one claim that it was abrogated? Moreover, the obvious corollary of the belief in the abrogation of verse 65 is that the fighters in early Islam were steadier and more unflinching than those who fought after Islam had come to prevail and had gained in strength and supporters. How could it possibly be said that weakness appeared among the believers after they had become powerful?

The apparent sense of the two verses is that they exhort the believers to fight, and that God promised them victory even if their enemies were ten times their number. Nevertheless, God, the Exalted, being knowledgeable about the weakness in the hearts of most believers, and about their inability to withstand extreme resistance, did not require them to fight back, but permitted them to stop resisting if the number of the enemy was double

theirs. In this he reduced their burden and showed them compassion, and, at the same time, promised them victory if they were steadfast in upholding the message of Islam.

Indeed, God made the obligation of fighting conditional on whether the number of the enemy is not more than twice the number of the Muslims. This is because the disbelievers, because of their ignorance of true religion and their lack of trust in God when they fight, cannot put up with hardships; in contrast, the faith of a believing person prompts him to stand firm in the face of danger, and calls on him to rise in order to consolidate Islam, for he believes in his success under any circumstances, and that he will profit from this deal regardless of whether he is victorious or defeated. God, the Exalted, says:

Relent not in pursuit of the enemy. If you are suffering, lo! they suffer even as you suffer and you hope from God that for which they cannot hope. God is ever [the] Knower, Wise. (Qur'an 4:104)

(24) If you go not forth He will afflict you with a painful doom. (Qur'an 9:39)

According to lbn 'Abbas, al-Hasan, and 'Ikrima, this verse is abrogated[133] by God's saying, "And the believers should not all go out to fight" (Qur'an 9: 122).

This view is based on the conviction that fighting was initially obligatory for all Muslims, although the apparent meaning of the verse is that the obligation was only for those called up for j ihad. Thus God, the Exalted, says:

O you who believe! What ails you that when it is said to you, "Go forth in the way of God," you are bowed down to the ground with heaviness. Take you pleasure in the life of the world rather than in the Hereafter? The comfort of the life of the world is but little than in [comparison with] the Hereafter (Qur'an 9:38). If you go not forth, He will afflict you with a painful doom, and will choose, instead of you, a folk other than you. You cannot harm Him at all. God is able to do all things (Qur'an 9:39).

The gist of these two verses is that those who were ordered to go forth for the jihad, but did not go, deserved punishment in the hereafter for having abandoned an incumbent duty. This in no way means that jihad was an obligation for all the Muslims.

This explanation further refutes the claim that abrogation is involved in God's saying, "Go forth, light-armed and heavy-armed, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the way of God! That is best for you if you but knew" (Qur'an 9:41).

We have frequently pointed out that the particularization of a general ordinance for a specific group of people does not amount to abrogation; rather, God, the Exalted, by saying, "And the believers should not all go out to fight" (Qur'an 9: 122), Himself provides proof that no abrogation is involved. This is because the verse shows that fighting, from the beginning, was not obligatory for all the Muslims. How, then, could it be the abrogator of the verse under discussion?

(25) God pardon you! Why did you give them leave, till it was clear to you which of them spoke the truth, and you knew the liars? (Qur'an 9:43)

Those who believe in God and the Last Day ask not leave of you, that they may struggle with their possessions and their selves; and God knows those who keep their duty [to Him]. (Qur'an 9:44)

According to Ibn 'Abbas, al-Hasan, 'Ikrima, and Qatada, these verses were abrogated by God's saying, "So, when they ask you for leave for some affair of their own, give leave to whom you will of them" (Qur'an 24:62).

The truth is that no abrogation is involved in these three verses. This is because they are explicit that the ban on the permission to stay behind, and the reproval of the Prophet for having allowed it, are specifically in the context in which the truthful are not distinct from the false. Furthermore, God clarifies that it was [those] other than the believers who used to seek the Prophet's permission to stay behind, in order to avoid fighting for him. Consequently, He ordered the Prophet not to grant leave for those whose intentions were not clear to him. However, if the intention were clear, then God permitted the believers to seek leave from the Prophet to attend to some of their affairs, and the Prophet was permitted to grant leave to anyone he wished among them. Accordingly, between the two verses there is no contradiction for one of them to be abrogated by the other.

It is not for the people of the City, and for the Bedouins who dwell around them, to stay behind God's Messenger, and to prefer their lives to his. (Qur'an 9:120)

Ibn Zayd maintains that this verse was abrogated by God's saying, "And the believers should not all go out to fight" (Qur'an 9: 122).

Here, too, the fact is that there was no abrogation, for [the theme of] verse 122 is a continuation of verse 120. The purport of the verses is that the obligation to par- ticipate in the jihad falls on Muslims only to the extent of the requirements of representational duty [kifaya, in which its performance by a sufficient number relieves others from undertaking it]. Hence, the second verse does not abrogate the first. It is true that participation in the jihad is obligatory for all Muslims if the circumstances so require, or if the lawfully invested authority demands it, or if there are other urgent factors that may require it. This obligation, however, is not the same as the representational obligation of the jihad that is established for Muslims on the basis of a legal principle itself. Both obligations remain effective, and have not been abrogated.

(27) And follow you what is revealed to you; and be you patient until God shall judge; and He is the best of judges. (Qur'an 10:109)

According to Ibn Zayd, this verse was abrogated by the one in which the believers are commanded to undertake jihad and be ruthless against disbelievers.[134] The invalidity of this opinion is obvious in the light of what we said in refuting the abrogation of Verse 120, discussed above under this subject. In addition, there is no evidence to corroborate the argument that al-sabr (patience) in this verse means patience with the disbelievers. It is, however, true that patience includes them by virtue of the general applicability of the verse, and as such, there is no need to claim that it was abrogated.

(28) Surely the Hour is coming; so pardon you, with a gracious pardoning. (Qur'an 15:85)

Ibn 'Abbas, Sa'id, and Qatada maintain that this verse has been abrogated by the sword verse [that ordained jihad].[135] lt is evident, however, that the pardoning commanded by the revelation is the pardoning of the ill-treatment directed at the Prophet by non-believers when he was engaged in conveying the law of his Lord. This has nothing to do with fighting. This is attested by God's saying, a few verses later, "So proclaim that you are commanded and tum you away from the idolaters. We suffice you against the mockers" (Qur’an 15:94-95).

Stated briefly, God in this verse exhorts the Prophet to be forbearing and steadfast in conveying His injunctions and spreading His laws, and to disregard the insult and mockery of the nonbelievers. This has no connection with the ordinance to fight, which became obligatory after Islam's might increased, and its proof had asserted itself. It is true that the Prophet was not commanded to take up jihad at the beginning of his mission. This was because he could not have done that in the prevailing circumstances except through miracles transcending the laws of nature. When he had gained the necessary power and the Muslims had increased in number and might, thereby becoming sufficient in number and equipment, he was commanded to wage war against the non-believers. We pointed out earlier that the Islamic law was revealed gradually. This does not mean abrogation of an ordinance that was established through the revelation.

(29) And of the fruits of the palms and the vines, you take therefrom an intoxicant (sakar) and a provision fair. (Qur’an 16:67)

Qatada, Sa'id b. Jubayr, al-Sha'bi, Mujahid, Ibrahim, and Abu Razzin regard this verse as having been abrogated by the prohibition of wine. [136]

The truth is that the verse is one of the precise verses, and the view that it has been abrogated depends on two factors:

1. That the term sakaran (intoxicant) means khamr (wine) and an intoxicant drink. Those who hold the view that the verse has been abrogated cannot prove this connection between sakar and khamr. One of the lexical meanings of sakar is "vinegar" (khall). It is in this sense that 'Ali b. Ibrahim has done an exegesis of it.[137] On the basis of this, the expression "provision fair" would mean good sustenance and delicious foods made from molasses of grapes, and so on.

2. That the verse makes the intoxicant permissible. This also cannot be proven by those who maintain its abrogation, for the verse is engaged in informing about an external thing and says nothing that endorses what people did with it. The verse occurs in the context of proving the existence of the Wise Creator by pointing to His celestial signs. Thus God, the Almighty, says:

And it is God who sends down out of heaven water, and therewith revives the earth after it is dead. Surely in that is a sign for a people who have ears. And surely in the cattle there is a lesson for you: We give you to drink of what is in their bellies, between filth and blood, pure milk, sweet to drinkers. And of the fruits of the palms and vines, you take therefrom an intoxicant and a provision fair. And the Lord revealed to the bees, saying, "Take to yourselves, of the mountains, houses, and of the trees, and of what they are building. Then eat of all manner of fruit, and follow the ways of

your Lord [that are] easy to go upon." Then comes there forth out of their bellies a drink of diverse hues wherein is healing for men. Surely in that is a sign for a people who reflect (Qur'an 16:65-69).

Thus God, Exalted and Glorified be His name, mentions that among his signs is that He causes the rain to descend from the heavens, and brings the earth back to life after death. Then He mentions His plan in creating animals and causing pure milk to come out from between filth and blood. He goes on to point out the quality he placed in palms and vines that makes it possible to extract an intoxicant from them as well as fair provisions. Indeed, the palm and vine are distinguished from other fruits because of their capacity. Then He goes on to mention the activities of the bee, whose work perplexes the mind of those who know about the requirements and procedure of making honey. This is through the revelation of God and His inspiration to the bee. Therefore, there is no evidence in the verse at all about the lawfulness of drinking an intoxicant. Moreover, if we were to admit that sakar here means muskir (an intoxicant), [we would say] the verse contains an indication that wine-drinking is not permitted, for it places sakar opposite fair provisions. In other words, the intoxicant is not among the fair provisions, and, therefore, it is not permitted. What supports this interpretation are the traditions, which have reached us from the Imams, indicating that wine was always among the forbidden things.

Al-Shaykh al-Saduq relates a tradition which he traces back to Muhiammad b. Muslim, who said:

The sixth Imam al-Sadiq was asked about wine. He said, "The Prophet of God said, 'The first thing that my Lord forbade me was idol worship and wine-drinking . . . .'"

Al-Rayyan reports on the authority of the eighth Imam, al-Rida, who said, "God did not send a prophet but that He ordered him to forbid wine."[138] Earlier, in chapter 1, on the inimitability of the Qur'an, we mentioned the prohibition of wine in the Torah.[139] However, what is beyond doubt is that Islamic law, for a time, did not publicize the prohibition of wine. Then it did so. This is the situation with all the ordinances in Islamic law. It is evident that this does not mean that wine was permitted at one time in the Shari'a and that then it was prohibited through abrogation.

(30) The fornicator shall marry none but a fornicatress or an idolatress; and the fornicatress -none shall marry her but a fornicator or an idolater; that is forbidden to the believers. (Qur'an 24:3)

According to Sa'id b. al-Musayyib and the majority of scholars, this verse was abrogated by the following one, in which God, the Exalted, says, "And marry (ankibu) such of you as are solitary and the pious of your slaves and maidservants" (Qur'an 24:32). He thus included the fornicatress among the "solitary" of the Muslims.[140]

The fact is that the verse was not abrogated, for the abrogation in it [would be] dependent on [whether] the word al-nikah signifies al-tazwij (marriage), and there is no evidence to support that. Furthermore, if nikah here means marriage, that would entail the view that a Muslim fornicator may marry an idolatress; and an idolater, a Muslim fornicatress. This would certainly be contrary to the apparent sense of the revelation and the

established practice of the Muslims. Consequently, according to the apparent meaning of the term, al-nikah here signifies sexual intercourse (wat'). This is a declarative sentence intended to address the question of adultery. The meaning of the verse, then, is: "The fornicator shall not commit fornication except with a fornicatoress, or with the one who is more contemptible than her, that is, the idolatress. And the fornicatress shall not fornicate except with a fornicator, or with the one who is more contemptible than him, that is, an idolater." As for the believer, he is forbidden that, because fornication is prohibited, and he cannot do that which is prohibited for him.

(31) Tell those who believe to forgive those who hope not for the days of God. (Qur’an 45: 14)

A group of scholars maintains that this verse has been abrogated by the sword verse (regarding jihad revealed in Medina) [9:5]. They argue that the verse [45:14] is a Mekkan verse and was revealed in connection with 'Umar b. al-Khattab when one of the nonbelievers used offensive language against him in Mekka before the Hijra. 'Umar had decided to strike the man. Thus God, the Exalted, revealed this verse, but it was subsequently abrogated by God's saying, "Slay the idolaters wherever you find them" (Qur’an 9:5). They [the scholars] support their contention with what was re- lated by 'Ali b. Ahmad, whose chain of transmission goes back to Ibn 'Abbas through Muhammad b. Hisham, 'Asim b. Sulayman, Juwaybir, and al-Dahhak.[141] However, this tradition is very weak, and it is more than enough that its transmitters include 'Aim b. Sulayman, who was a liar and fabricator.[142]Moreover, its substance is also weak. It is well known that the Muslims, before the Hijra, were weak, and that 'Umar was not a stalwart in battle; nor is he counted among the daring and awe-inspiring persons. How then could he hope to strike the idolater? Moreover, the word "forgive" in the verse under discussion suggests the ability to avenge. It is certain that such a thing was not possible for 'Umar before the Hijra-had he intended to strike the idolater, the idolater would certainly have hit him back.

The fact is that the verse is one of the precise revelations and, hence, was not abrogated. In it God commands Muslims to forgive and forbear the harm and insult dealt them in their personal lives by those who did not hope for the days of God. This is corroborated by the second part of the verse, in which God, the Exalted, says: "in order that He may requite folk what they used to earn. Whoso does right, it is for his soul, and whoso does wrong, it is against it. And afterward to you Lord you shall be brought back" (Qur’an 45:14-15).

Hence, the apparent sense of the verse is that for the wrongdoer who does not hope for the days of God and is not afraid of the day of return-regardless of whether he is an idolater or a scripture person, or even a Muslim who does not heed his religion-his requital is invested in God, Who does not forget the injustice of a wrong-doer and the negligence of a squanderer. Thus, a Muslim who believes in God must not anticipate the revenge, for God is more powerful than [he is] in vengeance and in taking him to task. This, then, is a commandment of moral virtue and is not in anyway contradictory of the commandment to fight for the Islamic mission or any

other cause. This is regardless of whether the verse was revealed before or after the sword verse.

(32) When you meet the unbelievers, smite their necks; then, when you have made wide slaughter among them, tie fast the bonds; then set them free, either by grace or ransom. (Qur'an 47:4)

A group of scholars maintains that this verse was abrogated by the sword verse, while others believe that the sword verse was abrogated by [this verse].[143] The fact is that it was neither abrogated nor an abrogator, and this conclusion needs to be explained in some detail.

The Rules Pertaining to the Disbelievers Who Are at War

The prevailing view among Imamite Shi'ites is that it is incumbent to kill the disbeliever (kafir) at war as long as he does not submit. This obligation is not replaced by imprisonment except when the believers weaken the disbelievers, and the latter become incapable of fighting because of the large [number of] casualties among them. However, if the disbeliever submits, the reason for killing him would end. As for imprisonment after being weakened, here, too, the duty to kill is stayed. The reason is that [Qur'an 47:4] regards the weakening of the enemy as the object of the injunction to slay them.

It is evident that the injunction is stayed when the purpose is achieved. At that point the Muslim authority has a choice between enslaving the prisoner or exchanging him for a Muslim prisoner. In either case there is no difference between an idolater and other groups of disbelievers. The scholars have claimed a consensus on what we have delineated so far. The opposition to these rules is rare indeed, and it hardly affects their soundness. We will further demonstrate it later.

This explanation is regarded as being in conformity with the apparent sense of the verse from every point of view, assuming, however, that "tie fast the bonds" means to enslave in the sense of "cutting a person off from independence" until he is exchanged or set free by grace. However, if "tie fast the bonds" does not mean enslavement, then it is necessary to consider enslavement as being implied along with setting one free by grace and ransom, for we know this to be permitted from other evidence. Hence, this functions as a restriction to the general meaning of the verse.

These rules have been discussed in the tradition related by al-Kulayni and Shaykh al-Tusi, both of whom trace it back to Talha b. Zayd and, through him, to the Imam al- Sadiq Talha said:

I heard the Imam say: "My father [the Imam al-Baqir] used to say that war has two governing principles: If the war is still raging and has not come to an end, and if the enemy has not been weakened, any prisoner taken in that condition is entirely at the Imam's discretion: He can have him beheaded, or [can] alternately cut off his hands and feet without severing them from his body, and leave him stranded in his blood u ntil he dies. This is in accordance with what God, the Exalted, said:

'This is the recompense of those who fight against God and His Messenger, and hasten about the earth, to do corruption there: They shall be slaughtered, or crucified, or their hands and feet shall alternately be struck off, or they shall be banished from the land. That is a degradation for them

in this world; and in the world to come awaits them a mighty chastisement.' (Qur’an 5:33)

"Have you not seen that the discretion which God gave to the Imam is only in connection with disbelief, and not in other things?"

At that point I asked the Imam al-Sadiq about God's saying, "Or they shall be banished from the land" [Qur’an 5:33]. The Imam said: "This has to do with pursuit-that is, chasing the enemy until it flees. If they are taken, then they are to be treated in accordance with the rules enacted for such cases.

"As for the other governing principle, if the war ends and the enemy is weakened, each prisoner taken under those circumstances is under the discretionary control of the Imam: If he so desired, he would treat them with grace and send them away, or if he so decided, he would ask them to ransom themselves, and if he so wished, he might en- slave them and they would become his slaves."[144]

Al-Dahhak and 'Ata', among the Sunni scholars, agree with us that killing a prisoner becomes inadmissible after the defeat of the enemy. Al-Hasan stated this explicitly, adding that the Imam has the right to either set him free through grace or ransom, or to enslave him.[145]

According to the above, [Q 47:4] was not abrogated. The most that one can say is that killing is reserved for particular situations, and not killing is for others, regardless of whether the sword verse preceded or succeeded this verse in revelation.

It is strange that Shaykh al-Tusi attributed to Shi’ite scholars the fact that they are of the opinion, in this connection, that when the enemy is weakened, the Imam should be given the discretion of either killing the prisoner or applying one of the three alternatives mentioned above. He says:

What is related by our associates is that the captive, if taken before the war and fighting have ended-that is, while the war is still going on and the fighting is raging-- then the Imam has the choice of either killing them or alternately cutting off their hands and feet without severing them, and leaving them to bleed to death. He does not have the right to exercise grace or ransom. However, if the captive is taken after the war has come to an end and hostilities have terminated, the Imam has the right either to set him free through grace, or to ransom him for money or in exchange for [a Muslim pris- oner], or to enslave him, or to kill him.

Al-Tabarsi, in his commentary on the Qur'an, follows al-Tusi,[146] although no tradtion is reported to support such a view.

In his book al-Mabsut, al-Tusi again states:

In the case of every captive taken after the war comes to an end, the Imam has the freedom to either set him free through grace, or enslave him, or hold him for ransom. He does not have the right to kill him, as our associates have related.[147]

Indeed, he has claimed a consensus in this regard and has produced traditions to this effect in the section dealing with al-fay ', and in the section, in his book al-Khilaf, dealing with the distribution of the spoils of war.

Among [others] who have claimed a consensus in this matter is the scholar al- Hilli in his two works, al-Muntaha and al-Tadhkira, and in the

section dealing with the captives of war in Kitab al-jihad. In the opinion of this author [al-Khu'i], the phrase darb al-riqab (cutting off the neck-that is, killing) in al-Tibyan appears to be a slip of the pen. Al-Tabarsi followed this without checking on its accuracy.

This is the view adopted by the Imamite Shi'ite scholars, as well as by al-Dahhak, 'Ata', and al-Hasan al-Basri

Other Views about This Verse [Q 47:4]

As for the remaining Sunni scholars, they have adopted several views.

1. According to some of them, the verse was revealed regarding the idolaters. Then it was abrogated by the sword verse. This view is attributed to Qatada, al-Dahhak, al-Suddi, Ibn Jurayl., lbn 'Abbas, and to a large number of scholars from Kufa. They say, "The idolater captive should be killed. It is not permissible to accept ransom for him, nor to show grace to him at all."[148]

The response [to this is as follows]. There is no reason for supporting the claim for abrogation on this ground. The relation of this verse to the sword verse is the relation between a general and a restricted ordinance, regardless of whether the [sword] verse preceded or succeeded the verse under discussion. We explained above that the subse- quent general ordinance cannot abrogate the earlier particular rule. This is even more true in the case of the general ordinance preceding the restricted ordinance.[149]

2. According to others, the verse was revealed regarding all the disbelievers, and, hence, its specific application to the idolater was abrogated. This opinion has been ascribed to Qatada, Mujahid, and al-Hakam, and this last person is famous among the followers of Abu Hanifa' s legal school.[150]

The response [to this is as follows]. This opinion is as evidently invalid as the previous one. It depends on the sword verse being subsequent in its revelation to the verse under discussion. This cannot be proven by those who maintain abrogation; nor is there any documentation to support it except for single traditions. We already explained that such traditions, according to the consensus among Muslim scholars, cannot be admitted as proof of abrogation. Moreover, even if we were to accept this hypothetically, there would be no reason to regard the sword verse as the abrogator of this verse [in an effort] to authenticate this opinion. The fact is that this verse par- ticularizes the sword verses. The proof is the consensus of the community that this verse either includes the idolaters or is specifically revealed regarding them. Accord- ingly, in the light of our argument above-that the general ruling cannot abrogate the restricted injunction-this verse functions as another circumstantial element restricting the sword (jihad) verse. If, on the other hand, we overlooked this factor, the present verse would, to a certain extent, contradict the general sense of the sword verse. What it would share with it is that the idolater should be taken as a captive at the end of the war. Now, the sword verse orders the killing, whereas this verse does not regard killing as proper. Such being the case, there is no possibility of even think- ing of the abrogation of the latter verse.

3. According to still others, this verse abrogates the sword verse. This opinion has been attributed to al-Dahhak and othcrs. [151]

The response [to this is as follows]. This opinion is contingent upon proving that the present verse was revealed [at a point] subsequent to the sword verse. This is impossible to establish. Moreover, as we explained, there is no need to maintain abrogation, regardless of whether the sword verse followed or preceded this verse.

4. According to some, the Imam has the right, in all circumstances, to kill the captive, enslave him, ask for ransom, or set him free on grace. This opinion has been related by Abu Talha on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas and has been adopted by a number of scholars, among whom are Ibn 'Umar, al-Hasan, 'Ata' (who is a follower of the Maliki rite), al-Shafi'i, al-Thawri, Abu 'Ubayd, and others. This opinion does not regard the verse as having been abrogated. [152] Al-Nahhas, after citing this opinion, says: "This is so because both these verses are precise and were acted upon. This is a correct opinion because abrogating takes place with something absolute. But if it is possible to act upon the two verses, then the view about their abrogation is meaningless. This opinion has been related on the authority of the scholars of Medina, as well as al-Shafi'i and Abu 'Ubayd."[153]

The response [to this is as follows]. This opinion, although it does not necessitate abrogation of the verse, is also baseless. The reason is that the verse is precise in stating that the grace and the ransom occur after the enemy is weakened. Thus, any opinion that states these two actions are admissible before that condition is met is an opinion contrary to the Qur'an. Likewise, the injunction to kill in the verse is limited to the period before the enemy is weakened. Thus, any opinion that admits the killing after it would be contrary to the Qur'an also. As mentioned earlier, the sword verse has been restricted by this verse.

As for the argument that this opinion is derived from the practice of the Prophet, who [was said to have] killed some captives, ransomed others, and set others free out of grace, this narrative, if admitted as sound, does not provide evidence of a choice between killing and the other alternatives, for it is possible that the one group of captives was killed before exhausting the enemy and that the others were ransomed and set free on grace after it. As for what has been related about the practice of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, assuming it is true, it has no evidentiary value, because it is clearly in contradiction to the stated instructions of the Qur'an.

(33) The beggar and the outcast had a share in their [the godfearing people] wealth. (Qur’an 51:19).

(34) Those [the righteous persons] in whose wealth is a right known (haqqun ma'lum) [for the beggar and the outcast.] (Qur’an 70:24)

A difference of opinion has occurred over whether these two verses have been ab- rogated or whether they are precise (muhkam). The point of the dispute is that "a right known," which has been ordered in both verses, could refer to the ordained zakat (alms), or could be a financial obligation other than the zakat, which is rec- ommended rather than obligatory. Thus, if the "right" or the "share" is another obligation besides the zakat, then the two verses have definitely been abrogated. This is so because zakat abrogated all other forms of obligatory benevolent charity (sadaqa) noted in the Qur'an. This view has been adopted by a group of scholars. In other words, they

maintain that whether the "right known" is the zakat itself or is a "right" recommended, without being obligatory, the two verses are undoubtedly precise.

Critical examination dictates the adoption of the latter view-namely, that the "right known" [refers to an obligation] other than the zakat, and that it is something that the Shari'a has recommended. Indeed, there are numerous traditions, related by both Sunnis and Shi'ites, that show that the obligatory charity is confined to the zakat. The reported views of the Imams explain the purport of the "right known."

Al-Kulayni reports from a chain of transmitters that goes back to Abu Basir:

We were with the Imam al-Sadiq and with us were some wealthy persons. They mentioned the zakat. The Imam said: "The zakat does not earn for its donor praise. For it is an external thing by means of which a person preserves his blood and is called a Muslim, and if he does not give it, his prayer is not accepted. However, you have an obligation to donate something else besides the zakat from your wealth." So I said, "May God keep you well! What else do we have to pay besides the zakat?" He replied, "Glory be to God! Have you not heard God saying in His Book, 'Those in whose wealth . . . ?'" I said, "Then, what is the "right known" in regard to us?" The Imam said, "By God, this is the thing a person knows of his wealth and the person gives it every day, week, or month, more or less regularly."

Al-Kulayni reports another tradition through a chain of transmission that goes back to Isma'il b. Jabir and to the Imam al-Sadiq, regarding whether the verses refer to the zakat or to something else. The Imam said, "This concerns a person to whom God has given wealth and [who] disburses a thousand, two thousand, three thousand, more or less. Thus he takes care of his kinsmen and relieves the weariness of his people." These are two of the traditions related on the authority of the Imams al-Baqir and al-Sadiq[154]

Al-Bayhaqi relates, in his Shu'ab al-Iman, a tradition which he refers back to Ghazwan b. Abi Hatim. He [Ghazwan] said:

Abu Dharr was outside the gate of the Caliph 'Uthman, having no permission to enter, when a man from the Quraysh passed by him and said, "O Abu Dharr, what makes you sit here?" Abu Dharr said, "They have refused me permission to enter." The man entered and asked ['Uthman]: "O Commander of the Faithful! Why is Abu Dharr at the door without permission to enter?" ['Uthman] ordered, and permission was given to him to enter. He came in and sat where the people were seated. At this point, 'Uthman said to Ka'b, "O Abu Ishaq, are you of the opinion, when the zakat on income is paid, whether the donor has any additional responsibility?" He said, "No." Abu Dharr stood up and he had a stick in his hand. He beat Ka'b on the head and said, "O son of a Jewess, you assert that there is no other [payment] due in his wealth when he has paid the zakat, whereas God, the Exalted, says, 'But prefer [the fugitives] above themselves, though poverty shall become their lot' (Qur'an 59:9); and God says, 'And feed with food the needy wretch, the orphan, and the prisoner, for love of Him' (Qur'an 76:8); and God says, 'Those in whose wealth is a right known for the beggar and

the outcast'" (Qur'an 70:24-25). And Abu Dharr continued to cite other such verses of the Qur'an.[155]

Ibn Jarir al-Tabari relates, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, the following tradition: "The 'right known' refers to something other than benevolent charity (Sadaqa), [some-thing] by means of which kindness to the relatives is shown, or hospitality to the guests, or help to anyone, or assistance to the outcast." [156]

lbn 'Abbas has been followed in this by a large number of commentators on the Qur'an. According to this view, the verse was not abrogated.

(35) O you who believe! When you hold a confidential talk with the Messenger, offer a freewill offering before your colloquy. That is better and purer for you. Yet if you find not means then, lo! God is All-forgiving and All-compassionate. (Qur'an 58: 12)

The majority of scholars are of the opinion that this verse has been abrogated by God's saying: "Fear you to advance freewill offerings before your confidential talk? Then, when you do it not and God has forgiven you, establish worship and pay the poor their due (zakat) and obey God and His Messenger. And God is aware of what you do" (Qur'an 58:13).

There are numerous traditions from both the Sunni and Shi'ite sources, that indicate that when this verse was revealed, no one acted upon it except 'Ali b. AbI Talib. He had a dinar in his possession and he exchanged it for ten dirhams. Thus, whenever he colloquized with the Prophet, he offered a dirham in charity, until he had met the Prophet ten times.

Traditions that Relate the Practice based on the Colloquy Verse [58: 12]

Ibn Babawayh relates a tradition that he refers back to Makhul, who said:

The Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali b. Abi Talib, said, "The trusted among the Companions of the Prophet knew that there was not a person among them who had any merit, but that I shared it with him and exceeded him in it, whereas I possess seventy merits which none of them share with me." I said, "O Commander of the Faithful, tell me about them." The Imam said, "The first of them is . . . ," and he enumerated the seventy merits. Among them he mentioned [the following]: "As for the twenty-fourth merit, God, the Almighty, the Glorified, revealed to His Prophet: 'When you hold a confidential talk . . . ' I had a dinar which I sold for ten dirhams. I used to offer a dirham in charity each time before I had an intimate talk with the Prophet. By God, no one else among his Companions besides me did that before me or after me. Then God, the Almighty, the Glorified, revealed, 'Fear you to advance . . .'"'[157] [Qur'an 58:13]

Ibn Jarir al-Tabari relates the following tradition, which he refers back to Mujahid, who said:

'Ali, may God be pleased with him, said: "There is a verse in the Book of God, on which no one has acted before me nor shall any one after me. I had a dinar which I exchanged for ten dirhams. Whenever I came to the Prophet I gave one dirham in charity. Then it was abrogated, and no one had acted upon it before me: "When you hold confidential talk."[158]

Al-Shawkani relates that 'Abd al-Raziq, 'Abd b. Humayd, Ibn al-Mundhir, lbn Abi Hatim, and Ibn Mardawayh reported that 'All said, in reference to the colloquy verse, "No one acted upon it, except me, until it was abrogated, and that was shortly after [it had been revealed]."

Sa'id b. Mansur, Ibn Rahawayh, Ibn Abi Shayba, 'Abd b. Humayd, Ibn Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, al-Hakim (who actually declared the tradition sound), and Ibn Mardawayh, related from 'Ali. He ['Ali] said:

In the Book of God is a verse on which no one before me has acted, nor shall anyone after me. This is the colloquy verse: "When you hold a confidential talk . . ." I had a dinar which I sold for ten dirhams. Whenever I had a confidential talk with the Prophet, I used to offer a dirham in charity. Then the verse was abrogated, and hence, no one has acted upon it. The verse [that replaced it] was revealed: "Fear you to offer . . ."[159]

The verse [Qur'an 58:12] indicates that offering charity before an intimate talk with the Prophet was a good deed, something that purified the inner self, and an injunction which was required for the good of human beings. Moreover, it determines that the injunction applied to those who had the means to give in charity; otherwise, God is Forgiving, Merciful.

There is no doubt that this is an action whose advantages can be independently perceived by reason and approved by the conscience. The reason is that in this particular ordinance there is a benefit for the poor because they are the recipients of the charity. Moreover, it lightens the burden of the Prophet because fewer people wanted to have confidential conversations with him. Following this verse, people did not just rush to have colloquies with him, except for those who had more love for colloquizing with the Prophet than for their wealth.

Furthermore, there is no doubt that the goodness of this act was not limited to one period to the exclusion of the other. The second verse [Qur'an 58:13] makes it clear that the generality of the Muslims, with the exception of 'Ali b. Abi Talib, avoided intimate conferences with the Prophet, wary of having to offer charity and chary of their wealth.

The Reason for the Abrogation of the "Colloquy" Charity

To be sure, in their evasion of the colloquy they missed out on many benefits and public good. In order to protect these benefits, God removed the obligation of the charity before the conference, giving precedence to the public interest over private ones, especially the benefit accruing to the poor. He required them, instead, to be steadfast in worship, in giving the zakiit, and obeying God and His Prophet.

Accordingly, there is no avoiding the view that the verse was abrogated-specifically, that the injunction in the first verse was abrogated and terminated in the subsequent verse. This belongs to the first kind of abrogation of a Qur'anic injunction [explained at the beginning of this chapter]-that is, the kind in which the [presence of] abrogating verse is contingent on the lapse of the time frame of the given injunction in the abrogated verse. However, the abrogation of the given injunction in the first verse did not occur because of any benefit that had required it at one time and not the other. The injunction applied generally for the lifetime of the Prophet. But the community's chariness of its wealth, and its aversion to

offering charity be- fore the conference, were hindrances to the continuance and perpetuity of the injunc- tion. Consequently, the obligatory aspect of the ruling was abrogated and the injunction was changed to an ordinance of indulgence (tarkhis).

Someone may query how it is possible for God to ordain an injunction that would make it obligatory to make a charitable gift before the conference when He knew since eternity that there would be an objection to it.

The response [to this is as follows]. In ordaining this injunction and then abrogating it, as God, Glorified be His name, did, it was actually a notification to the [people of the] community, by which God completed His argument against them. As a result of it, it became apparent for the community and for others that all the Companions preferred wealth over a confidential conversation with the Prophet, and that no one except the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali b. Abi Talib, acted upon this injunction. Abandoning the colloquy was not an act of disobedience against God, for the colloquy was not in itself obligatory. The obligatory aspect of the charitable gift was conditional upon the conference. Accordingly, if there were no colloquy, there would be no obli- gation to make the charitable offering. However, abandoning the colloquy indicates that those who did that gave more importance to wealth than to the conference.

The Wisdom of Legislating the Charitable Offering of the Colloquy

With the abrogation of the injunction after its enactment, the wisdom of its legislation becomes obvious, and the favor of God for His creatures is unveiled. The indifference of Muslims to conversing with the Prophet became clear, and the status attained by the Commander of the Faithful ['Ali] among them became known. This much is implied by the apparent sense of the revelation, which is further corroborated by the traditions related to this effect. However, if the matter of voluntary offerings made before the conference were a mere formality to test the loyalty of the Muslims, as was the case in the command to Abraham to sacrifice his son, then the subsequent verse would not abrogate the earlier one in the conventional sense of the term, but would simply stay the testing injunction- in other words, abrogation in the lexical sense.

In this connection, al-Razi reports that Abu Muslim was positive that the matter was intended as a trial to distinguish between those who truly believed and those who remained hypocrites. Therefore, no abrogation in the technical sense is involved. Al-Razi in agreement with this explanation, says, "This explanation is good; there is no objection to it."[160]

Al-Shaykh Sharaf al-Din relates:

Muhammad b. al-'Abbas, in his commentary on the Qur'an, reports seventy traditions from Sunni and Shi’ite sources, which confirm that the only person who, out of all people, colloquized with the Prophet was the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali . . . I have copied from the book of our preceptor, Abu Ja'far al-Tusi, the following tradition, which, he says, is also mentioned in the compendium of al-Tirmidi, and the commentary of al-Tha'alibi, who, in tum, has traced it back to 'Alqama al-Anmawi [and back]

to 'Ali b. Abi Talib. [Imam 'Ali says]: "Through me, God lightened the burden of this Umma because God tested the Companions [of the Prophet]. They stayed away from conversing with the Prophet. The Prophet secluded himself in his home, conversing with no one except those who were willing to offer alms. I had in my possession a dinar, and hence, I made the offering with it. In this way, I became the cause for God's relenting toward the Muslims, since I acted as the revelation had required. Had no one acted upon the verse, punishment would have descended from God for the failure of everyone to act upon it.[161]

This tradition is not included in the present published Jami', by al-Tirmidhi, nor have we succeeded in tracing this in any old manuscript of this compilation. Neither were we able to locate the commentary of al-Tha'alibi, who has been cited in all other works dealing with this subject; nor could we find it in any other place. Whatever the case, the injunction under consideration lasted only a short while and then it was abolished. No one put it into practice except the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, whose merit was manifested through that, regardless of whether the ordainment was actual or was meant to test the believers.

Open Prejudice in Muslim Traditions

Al-Razi found a reason to exonerate the leading Companions of the Prophet who had failed to carry out the injunction of the verse [concerning intimate conversations with the Prophet], even if they had had the time and still refrained from doing so. Thus he writes:

To carry out this requirement [of making voluntary offerings before conversing privately with the Prophet] was something that caused anguish among the poor, who were not able to make the offerings and hence felt disheartened. It also caused distress in the hearts of the wealthy, because if one did not carry out the injunction and someone else did, that action was bound to become a cause for taunting the one who did not make the offerings. Consequently, refraining from this act, which became a cause for an- guish for the poor and distress for the wealthy, was not a great harm because anything that is the cause of harmony is preferable than the thing that causes estrangement. Moreover, the colloquy was neither an obligatory act nor a recommended duty. Rather, as we have pointed out, people were required to make the offerings so that they would refrain from seeking these privileged meetings. Since it was better to avert these meet- ings, abstaining from them could not be cause for criticism.[162]

Remarks on al-Razi's Views

This apology from al-Razi does not explain the apparent sense of the passages of the Qur'an. Even if we were to disregard all the traditions [related] in this connection, anyone who is familiar with Arabic syntax would realize that God's query "Are you afraid . . . ?" is a reprimand for those who stayed away from conversing with the Prophet, whether that was done in fear of poverty or concern for wealth. Yet God forgives them for being remiss in the performance of their duty toward God and His Prophet. Stranger still is al-Razi's earlier admission that among the benefits of this requirement is that it distinguishes those who love the Hereafter from those

who are attached to this world, for wealth is the source of God's trial and testing.

As for his claim that the requirement to offer alms was a cause of anguish for the poor and of distress for the rich, and that abstaining from such a practice was preferable in that it would restore harmony: If such an argument were sound, then it would have been preferable to abandon all financial obligations, and God's commands would have become subject to a human decision of whether it is not preferable to abstain from them. It is not far-fetched for al-Razi to suggest something like this, or even worse, to do it in order to deny one of the excellences of 'Ali b. Abi Talib.

It is appropriate here to cite from Ni'zam al-Din al-Naysaburi, who has critically evaluated al-Razi's thesis. He writes:

The Qadi says: This-that is, 'Ali's voluntary offerings before the meeting--does not prove his excellence over the leading Companions of the Prophet, because the time period [between the revelation of the verse and its abrogation] may not have been long enough for them to carry out this obligation. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi says: "Let us concede that there was enough time, but carrying out the obligation would have caused anguish for the poor who had nothing to offer, and repulsion for the rich. There was no harm in abstaining from this act, for that which causes harmony is preferable to that which causes estrangement. Additionally, offering alms before the colloquy was obligatory, but the colloquy itself was neither obligatory nor recommended; rather, avoiding it was preferable, when, as we have explained, it was a source of weariness for the Prophet."

To this, we say that this statement is not free of some prejudice. Why should it be incumbent upon us to establish 'Ali's excellence over others in every trait? Why is it not possible for him to have a virtue that others from the Prophet's prominent Companions did not have?

Indeed, it has been related, on the authority of 'Abd Allah b., 'Umar that:

'Ali, may God be pleased with him, possessed three excellences of which if I had only one, I would have been pleased to possess it rather than the red-haired camels: his marriage to Fatima, may God be pleased with her; his being given the standard on the Day of Khaybar; and the colloquy verse. Can a fair-minded person say that the confi- dential conversations with the Prophet were shortcomings? More important, it is mentioned in the verse that the conversation with the Prophet was forbidden. What was required was to make a voluntary offering before the conversations. Anyone who carried out the requirements of the verse attained two kinds of excellences: satisfying the need of a poor person, and getting close to the Prophet by loving to converse with him, solving difficult problems [by asking him for solutions in person], and demonstrating that conversation with him was dearer than worldly possessions.[163]

(36) Whatever spoils of war God has given to His Messenger from the People of the cities belong to God, and His Messenger, and the near kinsman, orphans, the needy, and the traveler. (Qur’an 59:8)

It has been related from Qatada that al-fay' and al-ghanima are one, and at the beginning of Islam, al-ghanima-that is, the spoils of war-were distributed among these categories [mentioned in the verse]. Someone who

participated in the war would get no share of the spoils except if he were one of those mentioned in the verse. Then, God abrogated that in "Surat al-Anfal," and assigned them a one-fifth (khums) [share of the spoils] and apportioned four-fifths to those who had fought.[164] God, the Exalted says, "Know that, whatever booty you take, the fifth of it is God's, and the Messenger's, and the near kinsman's, and for the orphans, and for the needy and the traveler" (Qur’an 8:41).

The scholars have rejected this view and maintained, instead, that the booty taken by the Muslims as spoils of war is not the same as the fay' that God made possible for His Messenger without fighting. There is no contradiction in the two verses and therefore the one did not abrogate the other.

According to this author, what the scholars have said is clear and should not be disputed. It is sustained by the fact that it has not been recorded, in any biographical information on the Prophet, that he held the spoils of war for himself and his kinsmen, excluding the fighters. Moreover, that which proves the claim to its abrogation as invalid is the opinion held by those who say that "Surat al-Anfal," containing the khums verse [the one-fifth verse, Qur’an 8:41] was revealed, without the slightest doubt, before "Surat al-Hashr," containing thefay' verse.[165] However, what is important to bear in mind is that the abrogator has to be revealed subsequent to the abrogated passage. [Hence, the khums verse could not have been abrogated by the fay' verse, which is known to have been revealed after it.]

Notes

1. The term al-naskh was applied to the particularization (takhsis) in the Qur'anic exegesis attributed to Ibn 'Abbas.

2. For further details, see this author's book, Izhar al-Haqq, and Balaghi, Huda

3. Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Nahhas, Al-Nasikh wa al-Mansukh, ed. Muhammad 'Abd al-Salam Muhammad (Kuwait: Maktab al-Falah, n.d.) p.106.

4. In the phrase "until God shall give His command," the word ya'ti (here meaning "give") could equally be read as "to cause"; hence, the phrase would mean "until God causes His command to pass."-Trans

5. Isma'il b. 'Umar ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, 2d ed., 6 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1970), vol. 1, p. 276.

6. Qurtubi, Jami', vol. 2, p. 74

7. Ibid., p. 75.

8. Tabari, Tafsir, vol. 2, pp. 530-32

9. Ququbi, Jami', vol. 2, p. 229

10. Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, vol. 1, p. 369

11. Ibid. Ibn Kathir adds that al-Bukhari, 'Ali b. al-Madini, Ibrahim al-Nakha'i, and al-Thawri reported a tradition in which it is related that a master may be killed for killing his slave

12. Ahmad b. 'Ali al-Jassas. Kitab Ahkam al-Qur'an, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, n.d.; offset copy of the Istanbul edition, published in Dar al-Khilafa al-'Aliyya, by Matba'at al-Awqaf al-Islamiyya, 1916), vol. I, p. 137

13. Ibn al-'Arabi, Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol. 1, p. 27

14. Ahmad b. al-Husayn al-Bayhaqi, Al-Sunan al-Kubra printed in the margins of Al-Jawhar al-Nafis, by 'Ali b. 'Uthman al-Mardini lbn al-Turkumani, 10 vols. (Hyderabad: Matba'at Dar al-Ma'arif al-Islamiyya, 1925-1936), vol. 8, p. 36.

15. . Ibid., pp. 34-35

16. Ibid., p. 34

17. Jassas, Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol. 1, p. 139

18. Ibid., p. 140

19. Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 4, p. 86

20. Nahhas, Al-Nasikh, pp. 88-89

21. Muhammad Rashid Riqa, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Hakim [Tafsir al-Manar], 12 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qahira, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 138

22. Kashi, Al-Wafi, vol. 13, p. 17

23. Nahhas , Al-Nasikh, p. 92.

24. Ibid., p. 90

25. 'Utash (lit. severe thirst) is an illness that causes insatiable thirst for those afflicted.-Trans.

26. Kashi, Al-Wafi, vol. 7, pp. 43-44

27. Rida, Tafsir al-Manar, vol. 2, p. 156

28. . Jassas, Ahkam al-Qur'an, p. 177

29. Nahhas, Al-Nasikh, p. 97

30. Ibid., p. 111

31. Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Sahwkani, Fath al-Qadir al-Jami' bayna Fannay al-Riwaya wa Diraya min 'llm al-Tafsir, 2d ed., 5 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat wa Matba'at Mutafa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1964), vol. 1, p. 191.

32. These are the four sacred months during which fighting is forbidden: Dhu al-Qa'da, Dhu al-Hijja, and Muharram, and Rajab (respectively, the last two months of the year and the first and seventh of the next.)-Trans.

33. Nahhas, Al-Nasikh, p. 121

34. This is the version preserved in the original text

35. Nahhas, Al-Nasikh, pp. 194-96

36. The category thayb includes widows and widowers.-Trans

37. This ruling is only partly based on the Qur'an, and the legal schools do not entirely agree on the details. Of the verses which deal with adultery, only 24:2 prescribes the lash; but neither this nor any other verse prescribes banishment or stoning to death or the criterion of virginity. The so-called stoning verse, which is said to have been acknowledged by 'Umar as an original part of the Qur'an, was rejected by the community and kept out of the Qur'an. The punishment described by the author here, which must have entered Islam at an early date, must have been adopted from Judaism; cf. Deut. 22:22-28

38. Nahhas, Al-Nasikh, p. 310

39. Jassas, Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol. 2, p. 107

40. This phrase occurs in the context of the Qur'anic verses that list the women whom a man may not marry-e.g., his mother, sisters, daughters, aunts, stepmother. Cf. Qur’an 4:22-24.- Trans.

41. 'Abd al-Salam b. Taymiyya al-Harrani, al-Muntaqa min Akhbar al-Mustafa, ed. Muhammad Hamid al-Faqqi, 2 vols. (Cairo: al-Maktabat al-Tijariyya, 1931), vol. 2, p. 520.

42. Burhan al-Din 'Ali b. Abi Bakr al-Marghiyani, Al-Hidaya bi-Sharh Bidayat al-Mubtada, cited in Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahad, Sharh Fatah al-Qadir 'ala Sharb al-Hidaya, 8 vols. (Cairo: Bulaq, 1897-1900) vol. 2, p. 385. This attribution is confirmed by al-Shaykh Muhiammad al-Babarti in his commentary on al-Hidaya. However, Ibn al-Humam al-Hanafi has denied it in Fath al-Qadir. 'Abd al-Baqi al-Maliki al-Zurqani, in his commentary on Abu diya', al-Mukhtasar, vol. 3, p. 190, says: "The truth about mut'a, which is absolutely revoked, is that the contract specifies the time limit established by the man or the woman or her guardian, along with his informing her of his intention. However, if this was not included in the contract, but was intended by the man, and the woman understood that from him, then it was permissible. Malik held this opinion, and that it was beneficial for a person who was away [from his home]."

43. Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, vol. 2, pp. 243-44, which give his commentary on Qur’an 4:24.

44. Zurqani, Sharh 'ala al-Mukhtasar Ahl al-Diya', vol 8, p. 76.

45. Qurtubi, Jami', vol. 5, p. 130. Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, vol. 2, pp. 244-45, maintains that Ibn 'Abbas, Sa'id b. Jubayr, and al-Suddi used to read the verse as "And those from whom you seek contentment for a specified time, give to them their portions as a duty."

46. The legal period ('idda) is the period after a divorce during which the woman may not remarry, so that paternity could be determined in case of pregnancy. See Qur'an 2:228-232.-Trans

47. Nahhas, Al-Nasikh, pp. 325-26

48. Rida, Tafsir al-Manar, vol. 5, pp. 13-14

49. We shall touch on these false opinions attributed to Shi'ites in our exegesis of Q 1:5, "You alone we worship; You alone we ask for help."

50. This verse deals with the disposition of a wife's estate.-Trans

51. Nahhas, Al-Nasikh, p. 326.

52. Muslim, Sahih;, vol. 4, p. 131.

53. Mut 'a (indulgence) during the pilgrimage is the practice of temporarily interrupting the state of consecration after the end of the lesser pilgrimage, whereby the pilgrims may indulge in normal everyday activities until they reassume the state of consecration for the greater pilgrimage. The Prophet enforced this practice during his last pilgrimage, but a dispute arose after his death over whether this constituted a prophetic precedence, or whether it was dictated by expediency.- Trans.

54. Ibid., p. 131

55. Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, p. 325

56. Ibid., pp. 356, 363

57. Bayhaqi, Sunan, vol. 7, p. 206, where he adds that Muslim, in his Sahih;, narrated the same tradition from a different chain of transmission, on the authority of Humam

58. Muslim, Sahih;, vol. 4, p. 131.

59. Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, p. 380.

60. Ibid., vol. 4, p. 436

61. This tradition, including what Ibn Hanbal added, is reported in Muslim, Sahih, vol. 4, p. 48.

62. Ibid., p. 130; see app. 7 for its alteration in the compendium of al-Bukhari

63. Tabari, Tafsir; he comments on the verse in question, in vol. 5, p. 9.

64. Qurtubi, Tafsir, vol. 5, p. 130

65. Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, p. 349

66. Jassas, Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol. 2, p. 147

67. Muslim, Sahih, pp. 132-33, where he reports several traditions

68. Muhammad b. Yazid ibn Maja, Sunan Ibn Maja, (Cairo: 'Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1952), vol. 1, p. 631; Abu Dawud Sulayman b. al-Ash'ath al-Sijistani, Sunan Abi Dawud, ed. 'Izzat 'Ubayd al-Da''as and 'Adil al-Sayyid, 5 vols. (Homs, Syria: Muhammad 'Ali al-Sayyid, 1969-74), vol. 2, p. 559

69. Al-Muntaqa, vol. 2, p. 519

70. Bayhaqi, Sunan, vol. 7, p. 202

71. Ibn 'Abd al-Muttaqi, Kanz al- 'Ummal, vol. 8, p. 294.

72. The word nahi, as it occurs in the tradition in question, could be read with a simple past-tense declension (naha) or a passive declension (nuhiya). In the former case it would translate as rendered here: "The Prophet permitted the mut'a during the battle of Aw\as for three days, then banned (naha) it." In the latter case, the sentence would translate as "The Prophet permitted the mut'a . . . then it was banned ."-Trans

73. We quoted this earlier in [citing] the fifth tradition reported by Jabir. It was also reported by Abu Salih katib al-Layth in his copy of the compilation and by al-Tahhawi. Ibn Jarir [al-Tabari] relates it in his Tahdhib al-Athar, and so does Ibn 'Asakir, but both report that 'Umar said he would "flog" anyone practicing them. See Ibn 'Abd al-Muttaqi, Kanz al-'Ummal, vol. 15, pp. 519-20.

74. Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, p. 95

75. Muslim, Sahih, vol. 4, p. 36. See also, Abu Dawud al-Tayalisi, Musnad Abi Dawud al-Tayalisi, 11 vols (Hyderabad: Matba'at Da''irat al-Ma'arif al-Niamiyya), vol. 8, pp. 247-48, where he reports approximately the same tradition on the authority of Jabir

76. Bayhaqi, Sunan, vol. 7, p. 206.

77. Ibid

78. Muslim, Sahih , vol. 4, p. 133.

79. Marghiyani, Al-Hidaya (printed with Fath al-Qadir, by 'Abd al-Wahid) vol. 1, p. 446

80. Jassas, Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol. 2, p. 146
81. Rida, Tafsir al-Manar, vol. 5, p. 13-16
82. This and the following tradition are cited by Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqat (Cairo ed.) vol. 4, p. 72
83. This tradition has been reported by Abu Dawud, as cited in al-Taj, vol. 1, p. 66.
84. 'Allama al-Hilli, Sharh al-Tajrid, in the section dealing with the doctrine of the Imamate
85. Amidi, Al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam, vol. 3, p. 206
86. . Ibid., p. 241
87. See al-Muntaqa, vol. 2, p. 519
88. For Muhammad 'Abduh's opinion on the three repudiations, see Tafsir al-Manur, vol. 5, pp. 13-14
89. Nahhas, Al-Nasikh, p. 331
90. Ibid., pp. 333-34
91. The two persons entering such a pact pledge to stand firm by each other in the face of danger, and that the one who survives the other will inherit from him.-Trans
92. Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, vol. 2, pp. 272, 275
93. Jassas, Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol. 2, p. 185
94. This tradition has been reported by Ibn Hanbal, Abu Dawud, Ibn Maja. See al-Muntaqa, vol. 2, p. 462.
95. Nahhas, al-Nasikh, p. 336
96. Jassas, Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol. 2, p. 201
97. Tayalisi, Musnad, vol. 8, p. 264.
98. Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, p. 351
99. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 53
100. Ahmad b. Shu'ayb al-Nasa'i, Kitab al-Sunan al-Kubra, 3 vols. (Bombay: Al-Dar al-Qawmiyya, 1985-88), vol. 3, p. 421
101. Al-Muntaqa, vol. 2, p. 745
102. Ibn al-Humam, Fath al-Qadir, vol. 4, p. 386
103. Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il, vol. 18, sec. 28 of Kitab al-Qada', p. 218
104. Nahhas, al-Nasikh, p. 396; Jassas ,Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol. 2, p. 434. The latter source attributes this opinion to al-Hasan al-Bari, also
105. Bahrani, Tafsir al-Burhan, vol. 1, p. 430
106. Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, vol. 2, p. 469
107. Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 6, p. 458; Shawkani, Tafsir, vol. 2, p. 2. The latter source states that 'Abd b. Humayd, lbn Janr, Muhiammad b. Nar (in his Kitab al-Salat), al-Tabarani, Abu Nu'aym (in his al-Dala'il), and al-Bayhaqi (in his Shu'abal-Iman) have reported a variant of this tradition on the authority of Asma' bint Yazid
108. This tradition has been reported by Ahmad b. Hanbal; al-Nasa'i; Ibn Mundhir; al-Hakim, who authenticated it; Ibn Mardawayh; and al-Bayhaqi, in his Sunan. See Shawkani, Tafsir, vol. 2, p. 2
109. Ibid., p. 3.
110. Nahhas, al-Nasikh, pp. 405-6
111. Q 1:364
112. This was related by Abu Dawud, and a variant was related by al-Daraqutni. See al-Muntaqa, vol. 2, p. 942.
113. Nahhas, al-Nasikh, p. 406
114. Jassas Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol. 3, p. 9
115. Nahhas, al-Nasikh, pp. 420-21
116. Ibid., p. 419
117. Bahrani, Tafsir al-Burhan, vol. 1, p. 555
118. Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, vol. 3, p. 110
119. Bahrani, Tafsir al-Burhan, vol. 1, pp. 514-15
120. This tradition has been reported by Abu 'Ubayd, Ibn al-Mundhir, al-Tabarani, and Ibn Mardawayh. See al-Shawkani, Fath al-Qadir, vol. 2, p. 96
121. Qurtubi, Jami, Vol 7, p99.
122. Bahrani, Tafsir al-Burhan, vol. 1, p. 556
123. Bayhaqi, Sunan, vol. 4, p. 133

124. Nahhas, al-Nasikh, p. 459-60; Tabari, Tafsir, vol. 14, p. 52

125. Shawkani, Fath al-Qadir, vol. 2, p. 294

126. Ibid., p. 294

127. Nahhas, al-Nasikh, p. 461; Tabari, Tafsir, vol. 14, p. 52.

128. Kashi, al-Wafi vol. 3, p. 174

129. Bukhari, Sahih, vol. 4, p. 23, the section dealing with the verse of the Qur'an regarding "those who consume the goods of the orphans"; Muslim, Sahih, vol. 1, p. 64; Abu Dawud, Sunan, vol. 3, p. 295; and Nasa'i, Sunan, vol. 2, p. 131, with a slight variation in which he mentions "avarice" instead of "magic."

130. Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, vol. 3, pp. 341-42

131. Taqiy al-Din Ahmad b. 'Ali al-Maqrizi, Imta' al-Asma' bima lil-Nabi min al-Anba' wa al-Amwal wa al-Hafada wa al-Mita', ed. Muhammad 'Abd al-Hamid al-Namisi (Cairo: Dar al-Anar, 1981) pp. 361-62

132. See above

133. Nahhas, al-Nasikh, pp. 503-4. Qurtubi, Jami', vol. 8, p. 142, ascribes this view to al-Dahhak, also

134. Nahhas, al-Nasikh, p. 529

135. Ibid., p. 539

136. Ibid., pp. 542-43

137. . Bahrani, Tafsir al-Burhan, vol. 1, p. 577

138. Majlisi, Bihar, vol. 79, pp. 134-35; Kashi, al-Wafi, vol. 11, p. 79

139. See chapter 1, p. 53

140. . Nahhas, al-Nasikh, p. 582-83

141. Ibid., pp. 662-63.

142. Ibn 'Adi said, "He is counted among those who fabricated traditions." He also said, "Most of his traditions are rejected both for their content and their chains of transmission, and the weakness of his traditions is manifest." Al-Pallas said, "He used to fabricate traditions. I have never known anyone like him." Abu Hatim and al-Nasa'i said, "His transmission is rejected." Al-Daraqutni said, "He is a liar." He also said, in his 'llal,"He was weak in transmitting the traditions, well known for that." Ibn Habban said, "It is improper to record his traditions except to express astonishment." Abu Dawud al-Tayalisi said, "He was a liar." Al-Saji said, "He is to be rejected. He fabricates the traditions." Al-Azdi said, "He is weak and unrecognized." See Ibn Hajar, Lisan al-Mizan, vol. 3, pp. 218-19.

143. Nahhas, al-Nasikh, p. 668

144. Kashi, al-Wafi, vol. 9, p. 23

145. Qurtubi, Jami', vol. 16, pp. 227-28.Nahhas, al-Nasikh, p. 671-72, quotes this opinion on the authority of 'Ata'

146. Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Tusi, al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, ed. Ahmad Shawqi al-Amin and Ahmad Habib Qair, 10 vols (Najaf: al-Matba'at al-'Ilmiyya, 1957-63), vol. 9, p. 291

147. Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. al-Husayn al-Tusi, al-Mabsut fi Fiqh al-lmamiyya, ed. Muhammad Taqi al-Kashfi, 8 vols. (Tehran: Al-Maktabat al-Murtadawiyya li-Ihya' al-Athar al-Ja'fariyya, 1967), vol. 2, Kitab al-Jihad, p. 13

148. We discussed this at length in our book Ajwad al-Taqrirat

149. Qurtubi, Jami', vol. 16, p. 227.

150. Qurtubi, Jami', vol. 16, p. 227.

151. Ibid.

152. Ibid., p. 228

153. Nahhas, al-Nasikh, p. 673

154. Kashi, al-Wafi, p. 52, vol. 6

155. Ibn 'Abd al-Muttaqi, Kanz al- 'Ummal, vol. 3, 310.

156. Ququbi, Jami', vol. 29, p. 50

157. Bahrani, Tafsir al-Burhan, vol. 4, p. 309

158. Tabari, Tafsir, vol. 28, p. 15

159. 'Abd al-Wahid, Fath al-Qadir, vol. 5, p. 191. There are many more traditions on this subject. See the major commentaries on the Qur'an and the books of tradition. Also, Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 9, p. 170, records these traditions.

160. Razi, Tafsir, vol. 8, p 167

161. Majlisi, Bihar, vol. 41, pp. 26-27; Bahrani, Tafsir al-Burhan, vol. 2, p. 1100.
162. Razi, Tafsir, vol. 8, p. 167
163. Naysaburi, Tafsir, published in the margins of Tafsir of Tabari , vol. 28, p. 24
164. Nahhas, al-Nasikh, p. 703
165. Qurtubi, Jami', vol. 18, p. 14

11. Modification in the Creation

Synopsis: Eternal divine knowledge does not contradict divine omnipotence; the Jewish position about God's omnipotence; the place of modification (bada') in the Shi'ite doctrine; the determination of God's decree (qada); the benefit in the belief in modification; the real meaning of bada' in the Shi'ite doctrine; Sunni traditions that corroborate bada'; disclosures by the infallible Imams of future events.

In chapter 10 we discussed the question of abrogation (naskh) of ordinances, and this was in the realm of matters related to the Shari'a. We should now tum our attention to the question of bada', which is a sort of naskh, but in the realm of the matters connected with creation (takwin). This subject is important because the actual meaning of bada' is unknown to many Muslim scholars, and hence, they have attributed to the Shi'ites that of which they are innocent. Moreover, they have not been able to comprehend the subject well and have not been fair in their critique. If only they had proceeded with caution or had suspended judgment when they did not know the subject.[1]

To preserve complete integrity in citations and to apply caution in passing a judgment on a subject under investigation is a normal expectation in a work of scholarship. Moreover, in the matter of religion, one needs to observe the requirements of piety. In view of all this, it is necessary to make a few remarks to clarify the meaning of bada', even though it is not directly relevant to an introduction to the exegesis of the Qur'an.

To begin our discussion, it is appropriate to state that there is no doubt that the universe in its entirety is under God's sovereignty and His omnipotence. Moreover, the existence of any of the possible things is dependent upon the will of God, the Exalted. Thus, if God wills, He brings that thing into existence, and if He does not will, He does not create it.

Furthermore, there is no doubt that God's knowledge encompasses everything since eternity, and that all things in their entirety possess a cognizant apportionment in the eternal knowledge of God. This apportionment is sometimes designated as God's predetermination (taqdfr), and at other times as God's decree (qada'). However, God's predetermination and His knowledge about things since time eternal neither interferes with nor contradicts His omnipotence over them upon their creation. The reason is that the possible continues to be dependent for its existence upon its attachment to the will of God, and this is designated as free will or volition. Consequently, if God's will attaches to it, it comes into existence; otherwise, not. Divine knowledge is related to things as they are, as a result of being conditional on divine will, for the uncovering of a thing does not add anything to its existence. Thus, if existence is conditional upon the will of God, the Exalted, the knowledge related to that thing is in accordance with this state, or else the knowledge would not be in any respect a knowledge about that thing revealing for Him its reality. Accordingly, the meaning of God's predetermination of things and of His decree regarding them is as follows: All [possible] things are apportioned in divine knowledge from eternity according to what they would be from the point of view that their existence is conditional upon divine will being attached to them, depending

upon what is beneficial and what is the cause of corruption for them, which vary in accordance with varying conditions [in which things would come into being], but which are encompassed by divine knowledge.

The Jewish Position Regarding God's Omnipotence

The Jews maintain that since things have been recorded by the pen of destiny and decrees since eternity, it would be impossible for divine will to encompass anything else. It is for this reason that they say that God's hands are shackled in seizing, unfolding, taking, and giving, because the pen of destiny has fixed these already and there is no possibility of changing them.[2] It is astonishing that they have persisted in dispossessing God of omnipotence, but have not maintained such a view of human beings, in spite of the fact that the essential prerequisite in maintaining such a belief is one and the same, since eternal knowledge is related to the divine sanctions as well as to human actions.

The Place of Modification (bada) in the Sh 'ite Doctrine

The bada' (modification) that the Imamite Shi’ites speak about occurs only in the alterable decree (al-qada 'ghayr al-mahtum). As for the unalterable decree, there does not occur in it any alteration, but divine will shall inevitably be attached to the things that are related to divine decrees. To explain this, we shall examine the three kinds of divine decree.

First, we have the divine decree about which God informed none of His creatures, and the guarded knowledge He has kept exclusively to Himself. Certainly, bada' does not occur in this kind of decree. Rather, according to the traditions related on the authority of the Imams, badii' originates from this knowledge.

Inhis book al-'Uyun, al-Shaykh al-Saduq relates a tradition he traces back to al-Hasan b. Muhammad al-Nawfali, who heard the Imam al-Rida say to Sulayman al- Marzawi:

It has been related by my father that he heard the Imam al-Sadiq say: "God possesses two kinds of knowledge: one is the guarded, hidden knowledge which no one knows except Him. From that knowledge comes al-bada'. The other is the kind which He has taught His angels and His prophets. The learned ones among the Family of your Prophet [i.e., the Imams] know it . . ."[3]

In Basa'ir al-Darajat, al-Shaykh Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Saffar relates a tradition he traces back to Abu Basir, who heard the Imam al-Sadiq say:

God possesses two kinds of knowledge. [First], knowledge that is guarded, hidden, about which no one except Him knows. From this knowledge originates al-bada and [second], from knowledge that He has taught to His angels, messengers, and prophets, and which we know.[4]

Second, we have the divine decree regarding which God informed His Prophet and His angels that it would definitely come to pass. Undoubtedly, al-bada' does not occur in this kind, either. The difference between this and the first kind is that al-bada' does not originate in this knowledge.

The Imam al-Rida told Sulayman al-Marwazi, in the abovementioned tradition related by al-Sadiq:

'Ali (peace be upon him) used to say: "Knowledge is of two kinds. [First], knowledge that God taught His angels and His prophets, and what He taught His angels and His prophets will occur. He shall not belie Himself or His angels or His prophets. And [second], knowledge that [is] hidden with Him, of which He informed none of His creatures. He shall cause to pass that of it which He will, and hold back that which He will, and effaces of it what He will, and confirm what He will."[5]

Al-'Ayyashi relates from al-Fudayl, who heard the Imam al-Baqir say:

Some occurrences are inevitable, bound to happen definitely, and others are held back with God, of which He shall send forward what He will, and efface what He will, and confirm what He will. No one knows about them-that is, the occurrences held back by God. As for those [the knowledge of which] comes with the prophets, they are bound to happen, for God does not give lie to Himself, nor to His prophet or His angels.[6]

Third, there is the divine decree (which, God has informed His Prophet and His angels, shall come to pass) that occurs in the external. This is conditional on God's will not becoming attached to a different thing. This is the type in which al-badli' occurs:

God effaces whatever He will, and establishes whatever He will; and with Him is the Essence of the Book (Qur'an 13:39). To God belongs the Command before and after [the event] (Qur'an 30:4).

A number of traditions support this interpretation about the bada', of which the following are examples.

1. In the Tafsir of 'Ali b. Ibrahim, a tradition is related on the authority of 'Abd Allah b. Muskan, who reports from the Imam al-Sadiq:

He [Ibn Muskan] said: "On the Night of Determination (laylat al-qadar) the angels, the Spirit, and the angels who record [human deeds] descend to the heaven of the earth. Then they will write what will occur through the divine decree during that year. Thus, if God wills to hasten or delay something, or decrease something, He commands the angel to efface whatever He will, and, then, establish [in its place] what He will." I asked him, "Is everything recorded with God in a book?" He said, "Yes." Then I asked, "What thing will be there to occur after it?" He replied, "Glory be to God! Then God, the Blessed and Exalted, will create whatever He will."[7]

2. In the same Tafsir, a tradition is quoted on the authority of 'Abd Allah b. Muskan, who heard it from the Imams al-Baqir, al-Sadiq, and al-Kazim, in connection with the explanation of God's saying, "Therein every wise bidding is determined as a bidding from Us" (Qur'an 44:4):

This means that God predetermines everything whether truthful or false, and all that will happen that year, and it is for Him to will it or change it. He hastens what He will and delays what He will in matters connected with preordained time of death, sustenance, calamities, accidents, and illnesses, increasing them or decreasing them as He will….[8]

3. Al-Tabarsi, in his Kitab al-Ihitijaj, relates a tradition on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, who said:

But for one verse in the Qur'an, I would have related to you all that has occurred, is occurring, and is bound to occur until the Day of Judgment. And that verse is this: "God effaces . . ." [Qur'an 13:39].[9]

A similar tradition has been related by al-Saduq in his Amali and al-Tawhid, with a chain of transmission going back to al-Abagh b. Nubata, who reported from 'Ali b. Abi Talib.

4. The Tafsir of al-'Ayyashi cites a tradition reported by Zurara, who reported on the authority of the Imam al-Baqir:

He [Zurara] said, "'Ali b. al-Husayn [the fourth Imam] used to say, 'But for one verse in the Book of God, I would have informed you about what was going to happen until the Day of Judgment.' I asked him, "Which verse is that?" He replied, "God's saying, 'God effaces . . ."[10]

5. [In] Qurb al-Isnad [al-Hiyari] relates a tradition from al-Bizanti on the authority of the Imam al-Rida, who, tracing the tradition through all the Imams to the Imam 'Ali, said, "By God! But for a verse in the Book of God, we would have informed you about all that was going to happen until the coming of the Hour. This verse is, 'God effaces . . ."[11]

There are numerous other traditions that prove the occurrence of al-bada' in the conditional decree (al-qada' al-mawquf). To summarize what we have said: It is impossible for al-bada 'to occur in the unalterable decree, which is referred to as the Preserved Tablet, or the Essence of the Book, or the Guarded Knowledge with God. How can one even imagine modification taking place in it? Indeed, God, the Exalted, is knowledgeable about things from eternity; nothing escapes from His knowledge, even an atom's weight, in the earth or in the heaven.

Al-Saduq, in his book Ikmal al-Din, relates a tradition he traces back to Abu Basir and Sama'a, who heard it from the Imam al-Sadiq. He [al-Sadiq] said, "Anyone who asserts that for God, the Almighty, the Glorified, something appeared which He did not know yesterday, then, keep away from him."[12]

Al-'Ayyasi relates from Ibn Sinan, who heard al-Sadiq say:

Certainly, God hastens what He will and delays what He will. He effaces whatever He will and establishes whatever He will. With Him is the Essence of the Book. [And he added]: Any thing He desires, that thing is in His knowledge before He designs it. There is not a thing that appears for Him [i.e., in which bada' occurs] except that it was in His knowledge. Nothing appears for Him [i.e., in which bada 'occurs] about which He was ignorant.[13]

The same source reports from 'Amma b. Musa, who reported from al-Sadiq: He [al-Sadiq] was asked about God's saying, "God effaces what He will" [Qur’an13:39].

He said: "That Book [i.e., the Essence of the Book mentioned in the verse] is the one

God effaces and establishes as He will. It is from this that He turns down the supplication regarding the decree. The supplication which can stay the decree is predetermined, but when it reaches the Essence of the Book, the supplication has no effect upon anything in it." [14]

In his book al-Ghayba, al-Shaykh al-TiisI relates a tradition from al-Bizanti on the authority of the Imam al-Riqa, who traces it back to 'AlI b. AbI Talib, through all the other Imams. He [al-Riqa] said:

How can we discuss [future events] in spite of what the verse "God effaces what He will" says? As for the one who says that God does not

know a thing until after it comes into existence, then such a person has certainly adopted disbelief and has departed from the belief in divine oneness (tawhid).[15]

The traditions narrated on the authority of the Imams regarding the subject that God possessed knowledge before He created the creation are far more numerous to be recounted here. All the Imamite Shi'ites are in agreement on this, in accordance with the Book of God and the Sunna of His Prophet, and in accordance with what is required in a judgment based on sound innate reasoning.

The Benefit of Belief in al-Bada'

Al-Bada' could obtain only in the conditional decree, designated as the Tablet of Effacement and Confirmation (lawla al-mahw wa al-ithbat). Adopting the view that bada' is possible in it does not necessitate ascribing ignorance to God, nor is there anything in this view that is incompatible with God's greatness and His glory.

The reason is that belief in bada 'is a clear acknowledgment that the creation and survival of the universe are under the sovereignty of God and His omnipotence, and that the will of God is effective over things from eternity to infinity. In fact, belief in bada' emphasizes the distinction between divine knowledge and the knowledge of the creatures. The latter, even if it is the knowledge possessed by the prophets and apostles, does not encompass what is covered by divine knowledge. Although some of them have knowledge--by means of God's endowing them with it--about all aspects of possible things, their knowledge does not encompass the knowledge that God kept exclusively to Himself. Thus, they do not know whether God wills a thing to exist, or does not will it, except when He informs them about it in a definite way.

Furthermore, belief in badii 'causes a human being to concentrate on God and ask Him to listen to his prayer and fulfill his needs, and to aid him in obedience to Him and keep him away from disobedience. This is because rejection of bada' in the divine decree and upholding the view that what the Pen of Destiny has already written is unalterable, without exception, would cause a person who holds this belief to lose hope in the acceptance of his prayer. For, if what a person is asking from God has already been decreed by the Pen of Destiny, then, indeed, it is bound to happen, and there is no need for prayer and supplication; and if the Pen has decreed something else, then it would never happen and it would be useless for him to supplicate and to implore God for it to happen. When a person loses the hope of being granted his request, he would give up supplicating his Creator since there is no use in doing so. The same applies to all the devotions and charitable works that are reported, on the authority of the Imams, to be effective in increasing the lifetime, the sustenance, and other things that a person might desire.

This, then, is why numerous traditions narrated on the authority of the Imams lay great stress on the significance of bada' in the divine decree.

Al-Saduq relates a tradition in his al-Tawhid that he traces back to Zurara, who received it from one of the two Imams, al-Baqir or al-Sadiq: "God has not been worshiped with a thing [more fervently than with]

bada'."[16] In another tradition he relates that Hisham b. Salim heard the Imam al-Sadiq say: "Nothing has caused God to be seen as powerful more clearly than a thing like al-bada'."[17]

In still another tradition, al-Kulayni relates, from Muhammad b. Muslim, that the Imam al-Sadiq said:

God did not send a prophet until He required three characteristics in him: the affirmation of servanthood [in relation to God], the rejection of partners [for God], and the acknowledgment that God hastens what He will and delays what He will. [18]

The reason behind attaching this significance to al-bada 'is that the rejection of it has the same effect as the view that maintains that God does not have the power to change what has been decreed by the Pen of Destiny-Exalted is God above that. This is because both views would cause a person to lose faith in his supplications being answered by God, and this would [in turn] lead him to refrain from addressing his requests to God.

The Real Meaning of al-Bada' in the Shi'ite Doctrine

To recapitulate, the meaning of al-bada', as maintained by the Imamite Shi'ites, is derived from ibda' (bringing about)-that is, izhar (disclosing, manifesting a reality). The term bada' is applied to the act of izhar on the basis of the revelation and the resemblance between the two acts. It has been used in this sense in some of the Sunni traditions.

Al-Bukhari, for example, relates a tradition, from Abu 'Amra, that Abu Hurayra told him that he heard the Prophet say: "There were three among the Children of Israel: a leper, a blind person, and a bald person. God resolved (bada lil-Lah) to test them. Thus, He sent them an angel who came to the leper. . . ."[19]

A similar notion occurs in many Qur'anic passages:

Now God has lightened it for you, knowing that there is weakness in you (Qur'an 8:66).

Afterward, We raised them up again, that We might know which of the two parties would better calculate the time they tarried (Qur'an 18:12).

That He might try you [to see] which of you is fairest in works (Qur'an 77:2).

There are numerous traditions, recorded in Sunni sources, that maintain that charitable deeds and supplication can change the divine decree (qada').[20]

As for future events foretold in the traditions related on the authority of the infallible Imams, it is relevant to point out that whenever an Imam discloses something that is bound to happen, and that is not conditional upon anything, then, such infor- mation falls under the category of an unalterable decree (which, as discussed previ- ously in this chapter, is the second type of decree-namely, the unalterable one [al-qada' al-mahtum]. This is the type in which bada' does not occur because God does not give the lie to Himself or to His Prophet. However, when an Imam discloses something which is conditional on the divine will not attaching itself to something else, and when He corroborates it with an attached or unattached context, such a disclosure points to a conditional decree, which is subject to bada'. The information related by the infallible Imams is true even when the

bada' occurs in it and the divine will becomes attached to another thing. The reason is that the disclosed event is conditional upon its not being contrary to the divine will.

Al-'Ayyashi has related a tradition on the authority of 'Amr b. al-Humq (Himq), who said:

I went to visit the Commander of the Faithful ['Ali] when he was struck [with a sword] on his head. At that time he told me, "O 'Amr, I will be leaving you all." Then he added, "In the year seventy (689 C.E.), there will descend a calamity . . . ." I said, "May my father and mother be sacrifice for you! Until the year seventy there will be a calamity. Would there be comfort after the year seventy" He replied, "Yes, O 'Amr! Indeed, after calamity there is comfort." And then he went on to mention the verse "God effaces . . ."

Notes

1. This lack of knowledge about the meaning of the word bada' led scholars like Fakhr al-Razi to attribute to Shr'ites the false view ascribing ignorance to God. See his Tafsir on the verse "God blots out, and He establishes whatsoever He will" (13:39).

2. For some traditions pertaining to the will of God, see Majlisi, Bihar, vol. 4, pp. 92-134.

3. Al-Shaykh al-Saduq Muhammad b. 'Al Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi, 'Uyun Akhbar al-Rida, 2 vols. (Najaf: Al-Matba'at al-Haydariyya, 1970), vol. 1, p. 145, sec. 13, which describes the meeting between the Imam al-Rida and Sulayman al-Marwazi; and Majlisi, Bihar, the section dealing with al-bada' wa al naskh, in vol. 4, pp. 92-134.

4. Majlisi, Bihar, vol. 4, pp. 92-134. It has also been related by al-Kulayni from Abu Basir; see Kashi, al-Wafi, vol. 1 , p. 113.

5. Ibn Babawayh, 'Uyun Akhbar al-Rida, sec. 13, vol. I , p. 146. Al-Kulayni cites the same tradition from al-Fudayl b. Yasar, on the authority of al-Baqir. See Kashi, al-Wafi, vol. 1, p. 113

6. Quoted in Majlisi, Bihar, vol. 4, p. 119.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid. p. 134

9. Ahmad b. 'Ali. Abu Talib al-Tabarsi, al-Ihtijaj (Najaf: al-Matba'at al-Murtaqawiyya), p. 137

10. Majlisi, Bihar, vol. 2, p. 139

11. Ibid

12. Ibid., p. 136

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid

15. Ibid., p. 136. Al-Kulayni has also related a tradition to the same effect but through a different chain of transmission, in which al-Sadiq says: "Modification (bada ') does not occur for God in anything except that He knew about it before it came into being." See Kashi, al-Wafi, vol. 1, p. 113.

16. A variant tradition reads, ". . . more excellent (afdal) than bada'."

17. Al-Shaykh al-Saduq Muhammad b. 'Ali ibn Babawayh, al-Tawhid (Najaf: Al-Maba'at al-Haydariyya, 1966), p. 272; also narrated by Kulayni; see Kashi, al-Wafi, vol. 1, p. 113

18. Ibn Babawayh, al-Tawhid, p. 272; also narrated by al-Kulayni; see Kashi, al-Wafi, vol. l, p. 113.

19. Bukhari, Sahih, vol. 4, p. 443

20. There are numerous traditions, reported by Sunni sources, that suggest that supplication changes divine decree. See, for example, Tirmidhi, Sunan, vol. 8, p. 350; Ibn

Maja, Sunan, vol. 1, p. 24; Hakim, Mustadrak, vol. 1, p. 493; Ibn Hanbal, Musnad , vol. 5, pp. 277, 280, and 282

12. The Principles of the Exegesis

Synopsis: The invalidity of depending upon conjecture and the views of commentators in the comprehension of the Qur'an; the sources of the exegesis; particularization of the Qur'anic ordinances through a single tradition; the error of those who deny it, and their views on the question.

Al-tafsir(the exegesis), is the clarification of God's purport in His Book, the Qur'an. It is therefore improper to rely in this clarification on conjectures and application of personal discretion. Nor is it proper to depend on a thing which is not established as being a proof derived from the intellect ('aql) or from revelation (shar'), for it is prohibited to follow conjecture and to ascribe a thing to God without His permission. God, the Exalted, says:

Say, Has God permitted you, or do you invent a lie concerning God? (Qur'an 10:59).

In another place God says:

Do not follow that whereof you have no knowledge (Qur'an 17:36).

There are other verses in the Qur'an, as well as the traditions, that forbid actions that are not based on knowledge. Moreover, the traditions that prohibit engaging in a conjectural exegesis are exhaustive and reported in the Sunni as well as Shi'ite sources.

Consequently, it is clear that it is not permissible to follow any exegete in his commentary, regardless of whether he is, or is not, of sound religion, for this would be a kind of reliance on conjecture, and that is of no avail in seeking the truth.

Sources of the Exegesis

Undoubtedly, the commentator has to follow the apparent sense of the text as understood by an Arab well versed in the Arabic language. (We already demonstrated the evidentiary nature of the apparent meanings of the text.) Or one should follow what sound innate reason determines, because it is internal evidence just as the Prophet is external evidence. Or else, one should follow what has been established by the infallible leaders-the Prophet and the Imams-since they are the authorities in matters of religion. They are also the ones about whom the Prophet has left his last will and testament, requiring the Muslims to adhere to them. Thus he declared, "I leave among you two things of high esteem: the Book of God and my family, my ahl al-bayt. As long as you adhere to them both, you will never go astray, ever."[1]

There is no doubt about the certainty of their opinion if it is established through a reliable source of transmission that is not open to doubt, just as there is no doubt about the absence of its certainty if it is proven that it was transmitted through a weak tradition that does not meet the conditions for its admission as evidence. Is it possible to establish an authentic proof by means of evidence derived through conjecture? There is a dispute in this matter among the scholars.

The problem can be stated as follows:

The question rests on the dispute about the evidential nature of a reliable single tradition (khabar al-wahid al-thiqa), related from the infallible Imams, explaining the Qur'an. The point of the dispute is that the evidentiary nature

that is admitted for a single tradition, or for any other conjectural proof, requires that actions should be based on [these traditions or conjectures] when the true state of affairs is unknown, just as they would be based on the true state of affairs if it were known with certainty. This corollary is not realized except when the underlying idea of communication is a religious-legal ordinance, or a question on which the lawgiver has constructed such an ordinance. This condition may not be available in a single tradition that is related on the authority of the infallible Imams in regard to the exegesis of the Qur'an.

The response to the problem can be formulated as follows:

This objection is without substantiation. We explained, in our discussion of the science of legal theory, that the meaning of the evidentiary admission of a documentation, in matters that function as indicators of the true state of affairs, is their advancement to the level of ascertainment by means of an injunction from the lawgiver. Accordingly, the considered method would be one of the several ways to certainty. But it is the way that is based on obedience to the injunction of the lawgiver, rather than on reasoning. Hence, all that can be derived from the reliable documentation among the transmitted sources can also be derived from this conjectural source. The traditions are authenticated when they are in conformity with it, just as they become authenticated by means of mental knowledge. In any case, it is not an opinion formed without certainty.

This is corroborated by the practice that is common among rational persons. The reason [for this corroboration] is that they treat the reliable method as they do mental knowledge, without differentiating between their effects. Thus, the hand, for example, among rational persons, is a symbol of ownership for the person to whom the hand belongs when he has something in his hand. It is on the basis of this that they assign to him the effect of ownership and inform about his being an owner of a thing, with no one rejecting [the claim]. There is no evidence from the direction of the lawgiver that prohibits this continuous rational method.

Indeed, the crucial factor that is taken into consideration in a reliable tradition, and in other acceptable methods [of transmission], is that they should meet all the conditions of evidentiality. One of these is that a tradition should not be known to be false, for it makes no sense to give a false tradition the status of evidentiary proof. Accordingly, the traditions that are contrary to the consensus, or to the well-established sunna, or to the Qur'an, or to a sound rational conclusion, cannot qualify for admission as evidential documentation, even if they meet all the remaining conditions that are taken into consideration, in establishing sound evidence. In this regard, it makes no difference whether or not traditions explain a legal ordinance.

An underlying consideration in admitting a document as evidence is that the narrator, no matter how trustworthy, is not immune from reporting something different from the facts. As such, there is always, however minimal, a possibility of his having made an error, more so when the intermediaries are many in number. Therefore, one needs to cling to the criteria of evidentiary proof to eliminate this possibility, and to assume it to

be almost nonexistent. As for the assumption that there is a discrepancy, and that the tradition does not accord with reality, it makes no sense to follow its non-conformity, because that which renders a thing absolute is its essence, and its evidentiary status is established in accordance with the necessary rational verdict.

It is therefore necessary that the criteria of evidentiary proof be restricted to traditions other than those whose falsehood is incontrovertible, and whose narrative departs from the real state of affairs. The same applies to the accepted methods, other than the traditions, that assist a researcher in discovering the truth of a matter. This discussion leads us to consider many other situations and to respond to a number of problems and objections that arise from the admission of a communication reported, in the form of a single narration, as proof.

Particularization of the Qu r'anic Ordinances through a Single Narration

If the evidentiary nature of a single narration is established by means of definitive proof, can one use it to particularize the general injunctions that have been stated in the Qur'an? The prevalent view is that this is permissible, but a group of Sunni scholars has differed with it. Some of them have rejected it in absolute terms. According to Isa b. 'Aban, if a general injunction of the Qur'an has already been particularized through an established proof, then it is permissible to particularize it by means of a single narration; otherwise, it is not. However, al-Karakhi maintains that if a general injunction of the Qur'an has been particularized by a proof outside it, then it is permissible to particularize it after that by means of documentation provided by a single narration; otherwise, not. On the other hand, al-Qadi Abu Bakr has maintained that a final decision should be withheld in the matter.[2]

We have followed the well-established opinion in this matter because the incontrovertible tradition, as we have assumed, necessitates that one would follow its terms, as long as there is no reason to reject them.

Nevertheless, we should consider the objections that some scholars put forward against relying on single narrations, although these objections are baseless. These objections, moreover, are prompted by their error in the following matters.

1. They maintain that the Book of God is the Speech of God the Almighty, which was revealed to His Prophet, and that this is an incontestable fact about which there is no room for doubt. A single narration, however, does not have the certainty of being in conformity with the reality or to be an authentic pronouncement of the infallible Prophet or the Imams, for there is a possibility, however small, of an error in the narrator's communication about it. In this situation, reason does not permit aban- doning the incontestable proof for evidence in which there is a possibility of error. The response [to this is as follows]. Although the origin of the Book of God is incontrovertible, it is not certain that its actual injunction is in accordance with its general sense. This is because it is necessary to act in accordance with the general sense, since it constitutes the

apparent sense of the text. To be sure, the practice of rational persons has been to accept the apparent sense of the speech as evidence, and the lawgiver has not prohibited this practice. It is evident that the practice of the rational persons regarding the evidentiary nature of the apparent sense applies only when there is no context to suggest the contrary, regardless of whether that context is attached or unattached. When the context points to something other than the apparent sense, then one ought to discard the latter and act in accordance with the contextual sense. Consequently, it is inevitable that one should particularize the general injunctions of the Qur'an by means of a single narration, following the establishment of the absolute proof of its evidentiary status. In other words, the subject of the single narration, related on the authority of the infallible Imams, should be followed [as coming from the lawgiver]. The argument can be rephrased by saying that the chain of transmission of the Qur'an, even when the Qur'an itself is incontestable, is based on a conjectural proof. According to rational judgment, there is no problem in disregarding one conjectural proof in favor of another whose evidentiary status has been established by means of an incontrovertible proof.

2. They [some scholars] maintain that sound traditions from the infallible Imams affirm that traditions should be correlated with the Qur'an, and they maintain that those of them which disagree with the Qur'an should be discarded and rejected outright, for they cannot be something the Imams had said. Moreover, a tradition dealing with a particular matter reported on the authority of the Imams, which runs contrary to the general sense of the Qur'an because of the evidence it includes, should be rejected and its validity be denied.

The response [to this is as follows]. The conventional factual evidence for the explanation of the purport of the Qur'an is not ordinarily regarded as something that is in contradiction to its intent. Moreover, a specific verification in a single narration is evidence of the elaboration of the intended meaning of the Qur'anic statement that expresses the intent in general terms. However, the inconsistency between the two forms of evidence comes into effect when one of them contradicts the other in such a way that, when both originate from the same speaker or from someone who acts on his behalf, then the people who follow an accepted practice will withhold judgment concerning the intent of these statements. Thus, in this sense a specific single narration does not contradict the general sense of the Qur'an; rather, it functions as an expounder of its implications.

This is further supported by our knowledge of numerous traditions, related on the authority of the Imams, that particularize the general meanings of the Qur'an and restrict its absolute injunctions. If particularization or restriction by a single narration were in contradiction of the Qur'an, then the Imams would not have spoken correctly when they said, "That which contradicts our Lord's statement would not have been said by us. It is either vain or erroneous." In the light of this statement it is evident that particularizing or restricting a general sense does not involve a contradiction of the Qur'an.

Furthermore, the Imams established that if one of two contradictory traditions were in harmony with the Qur'an, that would weigh in favor of it against the other. In other words, the one contradicting it-that is, the one that does not agree with the general sense of the Qur'an-would have been evidence in itself had it not been contradicted by the other tradition. Therefore, it is evident that such a tradition, if its disagreement with the Qur'an were so great that it would be impossible to attain harmony between the two, then it would no longer be proof in itself, nor would there be any point in countering it with the other tradition and establishing the latter's preponder- ance. Consequently, it is inevitable that the purport of its disagreement with the Qur'an is that it is possible to harmonize the two conventionally on the basis of particularizing or restricting the general meaning of the Qur'anic revelation.

To conclude, the tradition that functions as a particularizer for the Qur'an, or a restricter for it, is evidentiary in itself and hence must be abided by except if it is tested by a contradicting tradition.

1. They maintain that if it is permissible to particularize the Qur'an through a single narration, then it would also be permissible to abrogate it by the same means. Since abrogation by means of such a tradition is definitely not permissible, it follows that particularization by means of it is also not permissible. The evidence in support of this correlation is that abrogation, as discussed in chapter 10, is a form of particularization of the period [of applicability], and the evidence of the abrogator is provided by the clarification that the earlier ordinance was specifically limited to a period terminated by the appearance of the evidence provided by the abrogator. Abrogation therefore does not abolish the substance of an ordinance but simply sets it up formally and outwardly. Particularization with respect to persons is similar to time specification-in both cases it is particularization, and, accordingly, if the first is permissible, so is the second.

The response [to this is as follows]. That which distinguishes the two kinds of particularization is the incontestable consensus regarding the prohibition of admitting a single narration as evidence of abrogation. Had it not been for this consensus, then it would have been permissible to admit abrogation by means of an evidentiary single narration, just as the particularization by it is permissible. We explained earlier that the Qur'an, although incontrovertible in the matter of its transmission, is not decisively clear in its meaning. There is no objection to resolving this latter aspect by means of a single narration whose evidentiary nature is established by means of absolute proof.

To be sure, the stated consensus is not a type that must be merely followed. Rather, it arises because certain things are of such a nature that if they occur externally, they would be transmitted without interruption. If it is transmitted by a few, to the exclusion of others, this, then, would be the proof of the falsehood of its narrator or his error. Consequently, it does not meet all the criteria that establish the evidentiary nature of a single tradition. It is for this reason that we maintain that the Qur'an does not become established by means of a single tradition. Itmust be transmitted

successively. Among the things which cannot be doubted is the fact that an abrogation is not applicable to some Muslims, to the exclusion of others. Therefore, the reasons for reporting it are strong. Hence, if an abrogation became conclusively established, then information about it would have been transmitted without interruption. If, however, it were reported by a single narration, this would serve as proof of its falsehood and error. In this way, the distinction between particularization and abrogation becomes clear, and the correlation between the permissibility of the former and that of the latter ceases to hold true.

Notes

1. See Ibn 'Abd al-Muttaqi, Kanz al- 'Ummal, including the section dealing with I'tisam, vol. 1, pp. 153-54, 332, where many sources of this tradition are listed

2. 'Ali b. Abi 'Ali al-Amidi, al-lkam fi Usul al-Ahkam, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat wa Matba'at Muhammad 'Ali Sabib, 1968), vol. 2, pp. 150-51.

13. The Qur'an: Created or Eternal with God?

Synopsis: The discussion about God's permanent attributes; the question of whether the Qur'an was created or eternal is an extraneous matter that has no connection with the Islamic doctrine; God's attributes of essence and attributes of action; the speech of the soul; the proof of the Ash 'arites in support of the speech of the soul; the imagination about the speech before its genesis is alien to the speech of the soul; the speech of the soul-a matter purely speculative.

No Muslim would ever doubt that the Speech of God that He revealed to His Prophet provided proof of his prophethood and evidence for his community. Moreover, no one doubts that that speech is one of God's permanent attributes, which are regarded as the attributes of beauty (jamaliyya). God, the Glorified, has described Himself with this attribute in His Book, where He, the exalted, says, "To Moses God spoke directly" (Qur’an 4: 164).

Influence of Greek Philosophy on Muslim Lives

The entire Muslim community used to believe that the Qur'an is the Speech of God and that that speech is an attribute of God. There was no disagreement among them regarding these two things, until Greek philosophy intruded into the community and divided it into factions which accused each other of disbelief. Thus, disputes and argumentation turned into fighting and bloodshed. So many were destroyed and so much blood was shed in Islam, and so many innocent lives were taken in spite of the fact that both the killer and the victim acknowledged the oneness of God, and accepted the prophethood and the Day of Judgment as their creed!

Is it not strange that a Muslim would allow himself to violate the honor of a brother Muslim and to kill him, while both of them profess that there is no god but God, alone; that He has no associate, and that Muhammad is the servant and Messenger of God, who brought the truth from Him [cf. Qur’an 37:37]; and that

"God shall raise those who are in the graves"? [Qur’an 22:7].

Was it not the Prophet's practice and the practice of those who followed him, in exercising authority, that they would regulate the traditions of Islam for those who had borne witness to it? Has anyone related that the Prophet, or any of those who succeeded him in his position, asked anyone whether the Qur'an was created or eternal, or questioned them regarding any disputed question besides it, and did not accept the true belief of a person except after he had declared himself on one side of the dispute or the other?

I do not know-and I wish I did know-how a Muslim who creates a dispute among Muslims will exonerate himself, and what he would answer his Lord with on the Day of Judgment when he meets Him, and when he is asked about what he had committed.

"Surely, we belong to God, and to Him we return" [Qur’an 2:1 56].

This problem, which is the dispute over whether the Qur'an was created or eternal, arose when Muslims became divided into two parties: the Ash'ari and the non-Ash'ari. The Ash'arites maintained that the Qur'an was eternal, and that the speech is of two kinds: "speech of the soul" (kalam nafsi) and

"uttered" speech (kalam lafzi). God's speech of the soul subsists in His essence and is eternal in His eternity. Accordingly, it is one of the attributes inherent in the divine essence. The non-Ash'arites, who include the Mu'tazilites and the 'Adliyya [those who believed in the justice of God], upheld the doctrine of the creation of the Qur'an and confined divine speech to the uttered kind. Accordingly, speech is among the attributes of divine action.

God's Attributes of Essence and Attributes of Action

The difference between the two types of divine attributes is that the attributes of essence are the ones the opposite of which are absolutely impossible to impute to God. Therefore, it would be incorrect to deny them of God in any way. For example, the attributes of knowledge ('ilm), power (qudra), and life (ayat): God, the Blessed and Holy, has never ceased, nor will He ever cease, to be characterized as the Knowing, the Powerful, and the Living. Moreover, it is impossible that He would not be thus at any moment.

As for the divine attributes of action, they are those with which God can be described and the opposite of which can be ascribed to Him at one time or another. For example, the attributes of creation (khalq) and giving sustenance (rizq): It can be said that God created such and such a thing, and did not create such and such a thing; God provided so-and-so with a son and did not provide him with wealth. Accordingly, it becomes obvious that speech is among God's attributes of action because it can be said that "God spoke to Moses and did not speak to Pharaoh," or that "God spoke to Moses on the Mount of Sinai, and did not speak to him in the Nile Valley."

The Speech of the Soul

All the Ash'arites agree about the existence of a kind of speech other than the well-known uttered type. They call this speech al-kalam al-nafsi. But beyond that they disagree. A group of them maintains that the speech of the soul is the purport of the uttered speech and its meaning. Others maintain that it is a substitute for the uttered speech, and that the meaning of the utterance in regard to it is derived from a sense other than the situational mode. As such, it resembles the way that voluntary actions reflect the will, knowledge, and life of the doer.

At any rate, what is well established among them is that they regard the speech [al-kalam = the Word = the Qur'an] as eternal. Nevertheless, al-Fadil al-Qushji ascribes to some the opinion that the pages and the cover of the Qur'an are also eternal.[1] As stated earlier, those other than the Ash'arites scholars are in agreement that the Qur'an was created, and that the uttered speech of God is like His primordial commands: They were created by Him and a sign among His signs. No useful purpose is attained from the theological debate on this question and from the analysis of the views regarding it, because it is outside the domain of the fundamental principles of religion (usul al-din) and their derivatives; nor is it relevant to religious questions and divine gnosis. However, I wish to discuss it in order to clarify to our Ash'arite brothers, who happen to constitute the majority of Muslims, that what they maintain in this connection, and regard as a necessary part of

the creed, is nothing more than a speculative matter, with no basis for it in reason and revelation.

To elaborate on this last point, [it should be noted that] there is no difference of opinion [about the fact] that the customary speech made up of the prevalent alphabetical letters in existence is a created thing, and hence impossible to ascribe to God eternally or otherwise. The dispute is, however, over the existence of another kind of speech, whose parts have come together all at once in actuality. The Ash'arites attest to this kind of speech and consider it one of the attributes of the divine essence, just as it is of other beings. In contrast to the Ash'arites, scholars reject this and confine the divine speech to the uttered one. They maintain that its subsistence in the speaker is the same as the subsistence of the action in the doer. The sound opinion is the latter one [because scholars do not believe in the existence of any speech other than the uttered one]. Our argument in support of this is that a statement is either declarative (khabariyya) or creative (inshai'iyya). As for the declarative sentences, if we were to analyze their components, we would find nine of them that are necessary in ascribing something to another or denying the ascription:

1. Words of the sentence, with their substance and forms;
2. The meanings and signification of the words;
3. Constructional organization of the sentence;
4. That which is indicated by the constructional organization;
5. The speaker's conception of the substance of the sentence and its forms;
6. The speaker's conception of the signification of the sentence, including its structure and form;
7. The conformity, or lack thereof, between the meaning of the sentence and the actuality;
8. The speaker's knowledge about the conformity or the lack thereof, or his doubt about it; and,
9. The speaker's will to create the sentence in the actuality, which is anticipated by its premises.

The Ash'arites concede that the speech of the soul does not have any of the abovementioned elements. Thus, there does not remain any existence whatsoever for the speech of the soul. As for the purport of the declarative sentence, even that cannot possibly reflect the speech of the soul. The reason is that the purport of the declarative sentence, as it is commonly understood, attributes a characteristic to a thing or denies its attribution. It aims, properly speaking, at confirming or denying the existence of a thing. We have established that the structural organization of the declarative sentence, in accordance with its situation, is indicative of the purpose of the speaker in the narration in regard to the attribution, whether affirmative or negative, to the situation. Accordingly, its significance [like the declarative sentence, consists of] nothing but the utterances that are made up of the conceived signs.

We have established, in another study,[2] that coining a word is an undertaking that makes a particular utterance or a specific form convey the thing the speaker wishes to convey. This is the purport of the declarative

sentence. The speech of the soul, according to those who maintain its existence, is similar to an uttered speech but is different in that it lacks external existence for the purpose of the narration.

As for the creative statements, they, too, resemble the declarative sentences. The distinction, however, between the two is that the creative sentences arc not made up of elements which either conform or do not conform with an actual reality of speech. Accordingly, the indispensable elements of such a statement are seven in number. They are exactly the same as the nine elements we identified for the declarative sentences, but with the exception of the seventh and eighth. As pointed out earlier, none of these elements make up the speech of the soul, as maintained by the Ash'arites.

It is possible that someone may ask, What is the purpose of the organization of the creative sentence? It is common knowledge among scholars that its purpose is to create a specific idea, such as one suitable for the outside world ('alam al-insha'). Thus, in the writings of many of these scholars, it is repeatedly mentioned that insha' (construction) means the creation of an idea by means of words. We treated this subject in our theoretical discussion of the legal foundations of Islamic law, in which we argued that there is no basis for the constructive existence (al-wujud al-insha'i) in relation to the postulate that meaning comes into existence through verbalization. In addition, even though an expression and an idea share the same external form, originating from the relation creted between them by the originator, the existence of the expression is a self-subsistent one, whereas the existence of the meaning is incidental and figurative. It is for this reason that the good or bad sense of the idea is passed on to the expression. In this sense it is correct to say that the idea comes into being through verbalization, but this is not limited to creative sentences; rather, it includes the declarative sentences as well as the terminology.

As for the idea existing without verbalization, this is limited to two kinds [of existence], and verbalization has nothing to do with either of them.

The first [is the idea's] real existence (wujud haqiqi), in which it emerges in the order of existing essences and accidents. For this existence to be realized, it is necessary that the idea's causes and events be fulfilled, and that the expressions that convey the idea's meaning not be regarded as natural causes that would have any role in its fulfillment.

The second kind is perceived existence (wujud i'tibari). It is a kind of existence for something from a subjective point of view, and not in the objective sense. This kind of existence, however, depends on the existence of the one who possesses that point of view. The view of every object is self-subsistent, and originates from itself directly, without depending at all upon the external existence of a particular term. As for the endorsement, by the lawgiver or by rational persons, of contracts ('uqud) or one-sided dispositions (Iqa'at) emanating from the people-even if it depends upon the issuance of the words, or something to the same effect, from the promulgator, and even if its terms do not have any binding effect if they are not explicit, in word or action-that endorsement in these matters nevertheless depends upon the issuance of terms, with the intention of

setting up or bringing about the contractual agreement. The subject of discussion, however, is the purport of the words brought to bear in the stage preceding the endorsement.

In short, the real or perceived existence of a thing does not depend on the words. As for the endorsement given by the lawgiver or the rational persons to the perceived existence of the words, although it is dependent on the wording in the contracts and one-sided dispositions, still [a thing's existence] depends on it. This dependency is due to the fact that the wording is used to convey the same meaning in establishing the terms of the contract. Verbal existence appertains to any idea that may be signified by speech. Consequently, there is no sense in the dictum "Construction (insha') is designed to bring about the meaning through verbalization."

The correct opinion in this regard is that the created structures are brought into being to manifest a mental matter of some kind. Such a mental matter could be subjective, such as in commanding and in prohibiting, or in contracts and one-sided dispositions; or it could be a characteristic such as ambition or hope. In this way, the forms of the sentences are pointers to a mental proposition: In the declarative sentence it is the intent of the narrative, whereas in the creative sentence it is something else.

Moreover, use of the accentuating sentence for a mental proposition may indeed be due to the need to accentuate this proposition, or it could be due to something other than that. Whether, in this latter form, the sentence is applied figuratively or actually, this is not the place for its elaboration. We have treated the subject in our lectures on juridical methodology.

It appears, from the application of the term talab (quest), that it has been coined to indicate an undertaking to attain a particular goal. Hence, one does not say, "He sought a long-cherished wish," nor, "He sought the Hereafter," except to indicate undertaking the quest for attaining them. In the lexicon Lisan al-'Arab [by Ibn Manzur], talab is defined as "an endeavor to find something and to attain it." On this basis, it is correct to apply the term talib (the one who seeks) to 'amir (the one who demands and commands) because he endeavors to fulfill the task he was asked to perform. This is because a command is that which calls upon a person to fulfill that which has been commanded. "Command" (amr), then, is in itself a confirmation of the quest (talab), and not an utterance of which the quest is the meaning. Accordingly, there is no basis for the opinion that a command is designated to express a demand; nor is there any basis for saying that a quest is a "mental speech" that is indicated by the "uttered speech."

The Ash'arites are correct in their view that al-talab means something other than al-irada (will). Nevertheless, they are certainly wrong in regarding it as a mental characteristic, and in considering that it is indicated by the uttered speech.

Refutation of the Thesis about the Speech of the Soul

In light of the above discussion, it is obvious that there is nothing in the instances of the declarative or creative sentences that might be considered a kind of speech inherent in the mind, and that might be called a "speech of the soul." True, it is necessary for the speaker to conceive of his speech before bringing it into being. The act of conceiving a thing is its creation in

the mind, in what is called "mental existence" (wujud dhihni). If this is what the Ash'arites mean by a speech of the soul, then it is correct. However, we have shown that this is not peculiar to speech only; it covers all voluntary acts. The speech should be understood in this vein because it is a voluntary act of the speaker.

Ash'arite Arguments in Support of the Thesis about the Speech of the Soul

The following are some of the arguments advanced by those who claim the existence of the speech of the soul.

First, all speakers conceive the speech mentally before speaking. That which exists externally in the form of a speech is actually an indicator of a similar thing existing in the mind. This mental speech is detected by every person in his mind. It is to this that al-Akhtal [the Arab-Christian poet of the Umayyad court] alludes:

Surely the speech [of a person] is in the heart, and the tongue is made to evince that which is in the heart.[3]

The answer, as has already been noted, is that the formation of the speech in the mind is its conception and its presence there. It is the mental existence that applies to all voluntary actions. A writer or a painter, [e.g.], must first conceive of his objects before he creates them. This mental process has no relation to the speech of the soul.

Second, one can apply the label "speech" to that part of it that exists in the mind. This application is sound without any need to prove it. Thus, a person says, "I have in my mind words that I wish not to reveal." Moreover, God, the Exalted, says: "Be secret in your speech, or proclaim it; He knows the thoughts within the breasts" (Qur’an 67: 13). The answer to this is again apparent from what was noted above. Speech can be such in its mental existence just as it is in its external form. For everything there are two forms of existence---external and mental-and a thing is the same thing in both forms of its existence. The thing is named without any attention to this conformity between the two forms. However, this situation is not peculiar to speech only. Thus, an engineer says, "I have in my mind a picture of a building that I will draw on a chart." Or a believer says, "It is in my mind that I fast tomorrow."

Third, it is appropriate to apply the term "speaker" to God. The form here is a verbal noun used to indicate the presence of a principle [of speech] in the divine essence, but only in a predicative sense. It is for this reason that the attributes involved in moving, standing still, or sleeping are applied only to the one performing these functions, and not to the one who created them. It is evident that it is not possible for uttered speech to be attributed to God, for it is not possible for the Eternal to be characterized by a created attribute. Consequently, it is inevitable that the speech of God will be regarded as eternal so as to describe God as the Speaker, by virtue of the characterization of Him with that term.

The response [to this is as follows]. The principle involved in the use of the term "speaker" (mutakallim) is not the speech, because it does not subsist in the speaker the way an attribute subsists in the thing characterized

by it. This is true even in the case of beings other than God. After all, speech is an accidental property for the voice which results from the vibration of the air. As such, it subsists in air and not in the speaker. The principle involved in the application of the word in this situation is the "speaking" (takallum). It does not make sense to understand [this in any sense] other than the sense of causing speech to occur. Hence, it carries the same meaning whether applied to God or to any other being.

As for the claim of one who says that "the verbal noun is used to indicate the presence of a principle [of speech] in the divine essence, in the same way that an attribute subsists in the one to whom it is ascribed," this is a manifest error. The reason is that the form indicates only some kind of subsistence of the principle [of speech] in the divine essence. As for the specific characteristics of this subsistence-and whether they constitute a form of existence, dwelling within somebody, or some other form- these characteristics cannot be determined from the purport of the form, for they change according to the context. Hence, they do not come under one general rule. The terms al-'alim (knower) and al-na'im (sleeper), for instance, are not applied to the originator of knowledge and sleep, whereas the terms al-qabid, (withholder), al-basit (bestower), al-nafi' (beneficent one), al-dar (causer of hurt) are applied to the originator of the conditions. Accordingly, the incorrectness of applying the term "moving" to the originator of motion does not necessitate the incorrectness of ap- plying the term "speaker" to the originator of speech.

To conclude, the thesis about the speech of the soul is merely a speculative matter that does not have a basis for supporting its existence, whether rationally or demonstratively. It is appropriate that we end this section by quoting the Imam al-Sadiq on this subject. The report has been related by al-Kulayni through a transmission going back to Abu Bakr, who said:

I heard Abu 'Abd Allah [al-Sadiq] say: "God, our Lord, the Almighty and Glorified, has never ceased to exist. Knowledge was His essence before there was anything to be known. Hearing was His essence before there was anything to be heard. Seeing was His essence before there was anything to be seen. Power was His essence before there was anything over which to exercise power. When He created things and knowable things came into being, His knowledge embraced all that is knowable; His hearing, all that can be heard; His sight, all that can be seen; and His power, all that can be subject to power." [At that point] I asked him, "Was God moving from eternity?" He replied, "Exalted is God above that! Motion is an attribute that comes into being with the act of moving." I said, "Was God speaking from eternity?" The Imam replied, "Speaking is an attribute that comes into being and is not eternal. God, the Almighty and Glorified, was when there was no speaker."[4]

Notes

1. Qushji, Sharh al-Tajrid , p. 354
2. See Ajwad al-Taqrirlit, on the subject of Usul in jurisprudence.

3. Diwan al-'Akhtal (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1981) p. 184.
4. Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 3, pp. 314-15.